Exploring the Voices of Selected Education Students in Blended Learning Modalities: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

Blended learning has become the new normal modality that was implemented to increase learning skills, improved learning outcomes, and promote collaborative learning between students. Despite the advantages of blended learning, this modality also comes with its challenges and difficulties. The study, The Voices of Selected Education Students in Blended Learning Modalities: A Phenomenological Study explored the challenges of the students encountered in blended learning modality. The study incorporated descriptive qualitative phenomenology method in exploring and describing the live experiences of six (6) students that consist of third-year and fourth-year education students that experienced blended learning modality. The data gathered is being analyzed through the use of Colaizzi's technique, which follows the steps of reading description of experiences, extraction of important statements, formulation of meanings, organization of themes integrated into exhaustive description, the evaluation of the results of the analysis and lastly, seeking verification to the informants (Turunen et al, 2023). The findings of the study revealed the various challenges of the students that include poor facilities, resources are limited, online gap communication, bus and other modes of transportation, late dissemination of information, environmental distractions, and money matter. Also, the informants have made their strategies or coping mechanisms to address their challenges in blended learning modality. These strategies include preparedness, on and on attitude (adaptation), well-being at its finest, efficiency in travel planning, resourcefulness, and being single-mindedness. Moreover, the informants of this study provide suggestions and recommendations for the other students who also experience their challenges in blended learning modality. These include persistence, productivity management, positivism, play on (taking advantage of free Wi-Fi), perseverance and practicality in solving the problems.

Keywords: Exploring, Various, Blended learning modality, Education Students, Phenomenology

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted education worldwide, leading to the implementation of various modalities to support learning. Blended learning emerged as a solution, allowing flexibility and student responsibility in setting learning goals l Despite its advantages, blended learning encountered obstacles that affected the learning experience for many students. This study focused on challenges faced by third- and fourth-year students in blended learning. It aimed to understand the impact on content knowledge, engagement, and motivation, emphasizing the need to improve learning experiences. Additionally, there is a need to understand how blended learning modalities can be used to support students' academic success and how these modalities can be used to address the challenges that students face in a blended learning environment. The main purpose of the phenomenological study is to explore the voices of the third- and fourth-year college students who experienced blended learning modality at Mandaue City College for the second semester of Academic Year 2022-2023. The study seeks to answer the questions about challenges and how students overcome the problems of blended learning as well as the recommendations given by the students to alleviate the problems encountered during blended learning.

Literature Review

Blended learning certainly provides significant opportunities and effective methods to facilitate education; however, it also poses various challenges. As highlighted in the study by Alammary (2019), blended learning consists of five components. Firstly, the face-to-face instructor-led class, in which students attend a class where the teacher delivers the learning material but there is minimal interaction, hands-on learning, or opportunity for practice, Secondly, face-to-face collaboration promotes the active participation of students in collaborative learning activities within the classroom setting. Thirdly, the online instructor-led process in which the teaching process is accomplished online with the teacher's assessment of the learning progress and interactions throughout the learning process. Then there is online collaboration, wherein it encourages students to participate in learning activities online. Finally, online self-paced learning allows students to study at their own pace with flexible time and space.

This study delves into foundational literature in the field, providing valuable insights. It offers essential context for understanding its contribution. By exploring past research, we aim to situate our study within the broader academic discourse. As mentioned by Vasileva - Stojanovska (2015), blended

learning is a student-centered learning method that combines traditional face-to-face classrooms (synchronous learning activities) with e-learning activities (asynchronous learning activities).

In the local scope, there are various challenges experienced by the students in the blended learning modality. In a study conducted at the University of Southern Mindanao, it was found that students experienced constant distractions from social media and household chores. The students also experienced low retention, poor mobile data services, and high internet costs that resulted in their inability to attend online classes. Insufficient technological resources and anxiety are also observed by the students in blended learning (Balolong, 2022). Another study shows the perspective of SPED teachers on blended learning and revealed similar problems to the previous study, which were an unstable internet connection and the lack of instructional knowledge of parents in remote teaching (Mendoza, 2022). Lastly, a study conducted at Cebu Technological University's Moalboal Campus revealed that students experienced challenges in finances, health, poor internet connection, and geographic factors (Ando et al., 2022).

Research Method

The study employed a Husserlian phenomenological research design to understand students' experiences in blended learning. This approach delved into first-hand experiences, focusing on "why" social occurrences happen. Through interviews, it explored challenges faced by college students in blended learning setups, aiming to reveal their detailed experiences in natural environments (Ahmad et al., 2019).

The informants of this study consist of at least six third- and fourth-year college students from the different majors in the School of Education at Mandaue City College, A.Y. 2022–2023. The informants were screened using criterion sampling, wherein whoever is available at the moment and is qualified to meet the screening criteria is selected. The criterion sampling method is a type of non-probability sampling in which participants meet predefined criteria (Moser, 2017). In other words, participants are selected because they possess knowledge and experiences regarding the specific phenomenon being studied, which enables them to offer valuable information.

The researchers utilized semi-structured interviews with third and fourth-year education students to investigate their experiences and challenges with blended learning. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions focused on challenges, strategies for overcoming them, and suggestions for improving the blended learning experience. Audio recording was used to accurately capture the information, with consent obtained from participants to ensure confidentiality. The collected data were analyzed to draw conclusions and make recommendations for the study.

Furthermore, the qualitative data that was gathered by the researchers from the interviews was analyzed using the Colaizzi method in data analysis that allows researchers to reveal emergent themes and their interwoven relationships (Wirihana, et. Al, 2018). The data analysis was done through seven phases, namely familiarization, identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, developing exhaustive description, producing fundamental structure and seeking verification of the fundamental structure.

Findings and Discussion

The data that has been collected is organized into three main themes and nineteen subthemes. These themes and subthemes serve as categories and subcategories to effectively categorize and analyze the gathered information. The first theme is the drawback in Blended Learning Modality, wherein it consists of seven subthemes; Poor Facilities, Resources are Limited, Online Gap Communication, Bus and other Modes of Transportation, Late Dissemination of Information, Environment Distractions, and Money Matters. The second theme is the Survival Kit of Educ Heroes. It consists of six subthemes, the Preparedness, On and On Attitude (Adaptation), Well-being at its Finest, Efficient in Travel Planning, Resourcefulness, Single-Mindedness. Lastly, the third theme is the Advocacy of Educ Heroes which also consists of six subthemes, the Persistence, Productivity Management, Positivism, Play On (Taking Advantage of free WiFi), Perseverance, and Practicality on Solving Problems. Each theme is elaborated below.

Theme 1. DRAWBACK IN BLENDED LEARNING MODALITY

Blended learning combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online format creating a hybrid learning environment. While blended learning offers unique opportunities for flexibility and personalized learning, it also presents its own set of challenges for students. In the implementation of blended learning modality, students experienced various challenges and difficulties. The study reveals the students' experiences about the struggles they have faced in blended learning modality. Each drawback is being elaborated below.

Sub- Theme 1.1. Poor Facilities and Equipment

"Sa mga rooms nga problem, kapoy kaayog huwat nya init kaayo" - Black Widow

Lack of classrooms is also one of the main problems of the students in blended learning modality. As stated by Black Widow (Informant 2) of this study, the school is implementing face to face classes with insufficient classrooms or facilities. There is insufficient infrastructure to accommodate the students which leads to a scarcity of suitable spaces for learning. Buildings, classrooms, laboratories, and equipment- education infrastructure - are crucial elements of learning environments in schools and universities. High-quality infrastructure facilitates better instruction, improves student outcomes, and reduces dropout rates, among other benefits (Teixeira, J. et. al, 2017). With classroom shortages, the Philippines cannot expect a good outcome from its school system (Apolinar, 2019).

"Room kay walay proper ventilation as in init kaayo. Dili bya katarong og paminaw ug makaaffect jud sa learning, ug makairita ang kainit". – Super Girl

Students experience a hard time in listening and understanding the lesson of the instructor because of the poor ventilation of the classrooms. Students are struggling with the hotness that they feel everyday in the school.

A well-ventilated classroom contributes to a more productive and better learning environment where students are motivated to perform better and engage more actively in class discussion, which leads to better results overall (Marquez, M.A.L, et. al, 2020). However, the informants shared that classroom

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didn't have enough proper ventilation. As a consequence, students experience discomfort while studying which can negatively impact their learning process. Poor ventilation of the indoor environment, especially in classrooms, can result in the accumulation of high levels of carbon dioxide. For learners, it is very difficult to concentrate when there are high levels of carbon dioxide. This means that it is almost impossible for them to think strategically (Shelley, 2022). The student's concentration in learning may be affected because of the poor ventilation.

"Sa klase karon sa ftf, ang problem jud namo is projector, wala kaayo mi nasabtan tungod kay wala mi nakita nga visual." – Invisible Women
"Kung sa ftf wala say mga gamit nga projector mga in ana kanang maglisod sad if walay laptop wa jud kay makita ug magamit sa enyung klase usa sad na ang projector
gamit jud kaayo." – Storm

Equipment Inadequacy such as projector is also one of the problems of the students in blended learning modality. Students cannot understand the lessons easily as they don't have any visuals or any instructional materials as their guidelines during the discussions.

Thus, the following statements that are being discussed are related to the subtheme poor facilities and equipment. Students are facing the challenges of the facilities and equipment of the school as it lacks a study area or spaces, insufficient classrooms, ventilation issues, and equipment and resources inadequacy. Ultimately, without adequate facilities and resources, it is extremely difficult to serve a large number of students with complex needs.

Sub- Theme 1.2. Resources are Limited (Internet)

"Challenges sa online kay poor internet connection". - Super Girl
"Sa online is di jud na mawagtang ang connectivity like kanang dili stable imong internet connection." – Green Arrow
"Sa online kay kanang usahay kay hinay ang connection". – Invisible Woman
"Kasagaran kay cignal then kung walay cignal diko makasabot sa idiscuss sa teacher, di mka klaro". – Storm (Line 99-100)

The study reveals that one of the main problems of the student in blended learning modality, specifically the online learning, is the connectivity. Students are experiencing a poor internet connection while having classes. As a result, students can hardly communicate with their peers or classmates and teachers and can hardly understand the topic as it disrupts the lesson flow of the teacher.

The internet has a vital impact on student academic outcomes as it helps students to access journals and articles which otherwise are not made available in the libraries (Affum, M., 2022). Online classes heavily rely on a stable internet connection for students to participate in virtual discussions, class meetings and interact with their peers and instructors. However, students encountered issues with their internet connection, such as frequent disconnections, slow speeds, or inconsistent signals. There are many ways that a lack of internet access can affect a student's academic performance. Students without internet can't connect with teachers or classmates, do independent research, or get online homework help (Lynch, M., 2017). These problems can disrupt the flow of online classes and hinder the effective communication and collaboration among students and instructors.

This study shows that students are limited in resources, specifically the internet as they experience poor internet connection, slow speed, and inconsistent signals which can affect the learning process. In which it can impede efficient communication and teamwork between students and teachers as well as the flow of online classes.

Sub-Theme 1.3. Online Gap Communication

"Sa online kay lisod makig communicate sa ubang teacher's kay ang uban dili active sa online.." – Super Girl

Students are having a hard time communicating with the teachers because some of them are not active online. Teachers' inactiveness in online educational platforms makes it difficult for students to communicate with teachers. Communication difficulty is one of the challenges of the students that they have experience in blended learning modality specifically in online learning.

Similarly, as stated in the study of Alawamleh, M., et. al, 2020, entitled "The effect of online learning on communication between instructors and students during Covid-19 pandemic", online learning has a negative impact on communication and its effectiveness between instructors and students, wherein students still prefer classroom classes over online classes due to the many problems they face when taking online classes, some of which include: their lack of motivation and understanding of the material, the decrease in communication levels between the students and their instructors, and their increased feeling of isolation caused by online classes.

"Ang sa klase sa online, naglisod ko kay di ko kainteract ug di maka express." –Starfire

Furthermore, students find it difficult to interact and express their thoughts and opinions in online classes. Students may miss out on informal conversations before or after class, group activities, and participation interactions with peers and instructors. For students, social interaction is reduced in online classes. Also, students encountered technical issues such as poor audio or video quality, connectivity problems, or lagging.

These technical limitations can disrupt the flow of conversation and make it challenging for students to participate actively or express themselves.

Communication is extremely important. Recognize the signs of a struggling student: they're withdrawn, they're communicating less. When you see them on video during class time, they are more inhibited. They aren't participating in class discussions. Then, talk to them; have a conversation—this student may need more engagement and contact from others (Neeley, 2020). Also, as stated by Kumar, S. (2015), many students are not provided with the high bandwidth or strong internet connection that online courses require, and thus fail to catch up with their virtual classmates.

Ultimately, online gap communication provided a challenge to the students in blended learning modality, specifically online learning as it had a significant impact on their learning experience. The inactivity of some teachers on online platforms has made it difficult for students to engage with them, hindering effective communication. Additionally, students struggle to express their thoughts and opinions, missing out on informal conversations and social interactions that are integral to their learning. Technical issues further worsen these difficulties, impeding active participation and hindering the flow of conversation. As a result, students may become withdrawn and communicate less.

Sub-Theme 1.4. Bus and other Modes of Transportation

"Akong first problem kay ang sakay, kay kuan alas otso man gyud ta manguli then pag 8:30 na, ang bus kay murag wala na diha. Ay dili gyud mura maglakaw pa ta padong parkmall para adto na lang mosakay. – Black Widow
"Sa face-to-face kay transportation." – Invisible Woman
"While ftf sir kay transportation gud mostly mao jud na common na problem." – Starfire

Transportation accessibility poses a common challenge for students attending face-to-face classes. The combination of heavy morning traffic and the scarcity of available rides to school makes it difficult for students to arrive on time for early morning classes. Morning rush hour traffic can be particularly problematic, especially in urban areas where a large number of students commute to school at similar times. This can be frustrating for students who rely on public transportation or private vehicles to reach their schools. Also, public transportation systems do not have enough buses or jeepneys to accommodate the number of students traveling during peak hours. As a result, students may have to wait for extended periods at bus stops, leading to potential lateness or missed classes. Moreover, securing transportation after 8:00 pm becomes increasingly challenging as buses tend to reach capacity quickly, leaving students struggling to find a ride. Many public transportation services operate on reduced schedules during late evening hours, which may result in longer wait times. Transportation has been playing a big part of the lives of most people nowadays.

This has greatly helped individuals to go to their desired location easily in just a specific amount of time no matter how far the distance could be. Now that the physical classes resumed after the pandemic, transportation became the daily partner of students in going to their respective schools (Costan, C. M., et. al, 2022). However, accessibility of transportation poses challenges to students. Traffic congestion can make students tardy in school (Cadaoas, M. J., et. al, 2019). Also, as stated by Gallenero, M., et. al, 2017, one of the most common reasons in addressing this issue is the traffic although some students are supposed to come early to school but because of the presence of traffic it affects their arrival time to school. Additionally, Sampson (2021) stated that one critical reason kids might be missing way too much in school is no consistent way to get there. When children cannot secure a ride to and from school, getting there is impossible -unless they live within walking distance.

In conclusion, transportation accessibility presents significant challenges for students attending face-to-face classes. Heavy morning traffic and a scarcity of available rides to school make it difficult for students to arrive on time for early morning classes. These transportation challenges have a direct impact on students' education and well-being. Tardiness and missed classes due to transportation issues disrupt learning and can increase stress levels. Furthermore, the lack of consistent transportation options can result in students being unable to attend school at all.

Sub-Theme 1.5. Late Dissemination of Information

"mukalit lag online diay to ang isa ka subject" – Black Widow
"Mukalit lag inform ang teacher nga wlay klase nga kanang nagtuo ka nga naa maong muadto kas skwelahan" – Super Girl
"Unya kanang late announcement bitaw, like for this day kay online diay niya nakagikan naka sa inyoha." – Green Arrow

One of the main problems of the blended learning modality was the unexpected announcement of class online especially when they are in school. Students are expecting to have face to face classes but the instructors suddenly post an announcement that the class will be conducted online. Many students may not have access to reliable internet connectivity or data on their mobile devices while at school. In such cases, they would need to travel back home to access a stable internet connection, resulting in additional delays. However, due to the delay caused by traffic and travel time, some students may end up missing a significant portion of the online class. This can lead to reduced engagement and interaction with the instructor and other classmates, impacting their learning experience. Also, when students receive late announcements of class transitions to online format, they may feel that the time spent commuting and dealing with traffic was wasted.

With online teaching, there's not just one meeting time, one form of communication, or one medium of conveying messages. Follow up with an email or announcement, and have multiple touchpoints with the students through various media (Neeley, 2020). Providing clear instructions, timely and early announcements to students regarding the mode of instruction is crucial. Students may naturally assume that classes will be conducted face to face if there is no clear communication about the mode of instruction. This assumption can lead to challenges if the classes are actually planned to be held online or face to face class. By providing clear information and early announcement, students can better prepare themselves for the upcoming modes of classes.

In conclusion, unexpected announcements of online classes in blended learning modality can create challenges for students who are expecting face-to-face classes. The lack of reliable internet connectivity or data at school may require students to travel back home to access stable internet connections, resulting in delays and missed portions of online classes. To mitigate these challenges, it is crucial for instructors to provide clear instructions and make timely and early announcements about the mode of instruction.

Sub-Theme 1.6. Environmental Distractions

"In online kay you can do random things man gud sa online like you can scroll in social media kay wala baya ka makit-an sa inyong maestra." – Green Arrow

Based on the statement, in online classes, students may face distractions that can hinder their ability to fully concentrate on the class. Without the physical presence of teachers or classmates, students may be tempted to access social media platforms, browse the internet, or multitask with unrelated tasks during online classes. These distractions can divert their attention away from the educational content being presented and hinder their ability to concentrate effectively.

Similarly, Botros (2020) stated that a main source of distraction is digital technology. While electronic devices are required for online learning, they easily steal attention for long periods of time. One way in which digital technology can be distracting is through the abundance of entertainment and social media content it offers. For example, a student may open their device with the intention of using it for educational purposes but get sidetracked by watching an engaging video or scrolling through social media feeds. These activities can easily consume a significant amount of time, leading to a loss of focus on educational tasks.

"Also, kanang sa environment kay syempre sa atu-a kay saba kaayo kay daghan kaayong sakyanan sa lisod jud kaayo siya." – Starfire

Distractions such as the sounds of cars passing by, and other presence of noise from the environment of the student can make it difficult for them to concentrate, follow the lesson, or actively participate in online discussions. In addition to electronic devices, background noises can be a huge obstacle when it comes to online learning.

As stated by Botros (2020), outside noises like kids playing in the street, neighbors having parties, loud cars, and barking dogs can draw attention away from school. In other words, external noises can be a significant source of distraction for students, diverting their attention away from their schoolwork.

Thus, online classes present the technology and physical distractions that challenge the students' concentration and focus in online class. The ease of access to these distractions can lead to prolonged periods of disengagement from the online class.

Moreover, students are susceptible to external disturbances from their physical surroundings. Background noises, such as vehicle sounds, construction, household activities, or even pets, can divert attention away from the class material. These distractions can be particularly challenging for students who do not have access to a quiet and dedicated study space at home.

Sub-Theme 1.7. Money Matter

"Sa akoa sa, since blended man jud ta, first kay plite gani niya isa ra gani atong klase. It's a waste of money gani sya kay layo sad baya (ang school) niya pila gud ang plite." – Green Arrow

One of the significant concerns for students in the blended learning modality, particularly in face-to-face classes, is the financial aspect. It can be financially burdensome for students to spend money on transportation, especially when they have only one class to attend. The increasing cost of transportation fares makes it even more difficult for students to bear the expense of a single class session.

According to the study of Abaricia (2018), the main effect of increasing fare of transportation to students is that, it will shorten their allowance and reduce their budget. In other words, when transportation costs rise, students have to allocate a larger portion of their limited funds to commuting to and from their educational institutions. As a result, their allowances, which are often already tight, become even more constrained. The increased financial strain can create a sense of financial insecurity and put additional stress on students, potentially affecting their overall well-being and academic performance (Moore, 2021).

In conclusion, the financial burden of transportation expenses in the blended learning modality, particularly for face-to-face classes, is a significant concern for students. The increasing cost of transportation fares adds to the financial strain experienced by students, as they have to allocate a larger portion of their limited funds to commute to and from their educational institutions. This situation can lead to a shortened allowance and create a sense of financial insecurity, putting additional stress on students. Wherein, these challenges have the potential to negatively impact students' overall well-being and academic performance.

Theme 2. SURVIVAL KIT OF EDUC HEROES

With the presented challenges in blended learning modality, students share their coping mechanisms to aid the problem. Strategies are also presented to help students cope with these challenges.

Sub-Theme 2.1. Preparedness

"When it comes sa face-to-face kay time management kay sa ako kay working student sa ko and time management is a big thing jud. Organize bitaw ka like organize ka sa imong time nga dili ma compromise ang isa ka priority nimo." (Green Arrow)

Time management is important for students who are also working because it helps them effectively balance their academic responsibilities and with their work commitments. Juggling both work and studies can be challenging, but with proper time management, students can optimize their productivity.

According to Logsdon (2020), the problem is not a lack of time—it's how people manage that time that matters the most. Effective time management involves identifying priorities, setting goals, and implementing strategies to optimize productivity and efficiency. It is not about having more time, but rather making the best use of the time available.

"sa online kay dapat mag prepare nga dapat kusog imong cignal kusog para maka kuan kas enyung klase." (Invisible Woman)

The availability of a reliable and consistent internet connection is essential for the students in participating in online learning class. In order for the students to attend online classes, they first prepare and check the stability of the signal or internet connection.

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According to Adil (2023), the Internet is known as the world of knowledge. It makes a lot of things easier for people including education. Similarly, having a stable internet connection is crucial for students in online classes as it enables them to access a wide range of educational resources, engage in real-time communication with teachers and peers, and participate actively in online learning. A stable internet connection ensures smooth communication, enabling students to actively participate, share ideas, and work together effectively (Murthy, S., & Malathi, R., 2021).

"Sa transportation kay mumata ug sayo para makagikan ug sayo". Invisible Woman

In face-to-face classes, waking up early provided students with additional time to prepare themselves for the day ahead to prevent traffic and to avoid being late. Students can avoid rushing and stress with being late due to traffic or other unforeseen circumstances during their ride to school.

According to Bain, P., et. al. (2016) preparing early and avoiding traffic can enhance productivity and efficiency. It allows individuals to make better use of their time by avoiding unnecessary delays and enabling them to engage in productive activities in school. Similarly, students tend to prepare and go to school to avoid traffic and avoid being late in class.

Ultimately, effective time management, reliable internet connectivity, and early preparation are key factors that contribute to the preparedness of the students. When students effectively manage their time, they can reduce stress levels by staying organized and meeting deadlines. With reliable internet connectivity, students can fully engage in online classes, access digital learning resources, and participate in interactive activities. Moreover, early preparation can increase students' productivity and efficiency.

Sub-Theme 2.2. On and On Attitude (Adaptation)

"In online, mangeta jud silag area nga kusog ang cignal." – Storm
"Sa online, magprepare jud ko ug kusog nga signal, if data ra nya hinay kaayo ang connection, mangeta ko sa silingan nga naay wifi." – Invisible Woman

To overcome the problem of unstable internet connections, students actively search areas with reliable signal or data connectivity. Also, students seek assistance from their neighbors by utilizing their personal Wi-Fi networks which can be a temporary solution for students who experience frequent disruptions in their own internet connection. By these actions, it demonstrates the flexibility of students in addressing the challenges of unstable internet connections during online classes.

Similarly, according to a study by Wright and Riemer (2019), having a backup internet connection can help students maintain continuity in online learning when faced with connectivity issues. Students can explore options for alternative internet connections, such as using mobile data or seeking out public Wi-Fi hotspots as a backup in case their primary internet connection becomes unstable.

"Sa classroom nga problema kay agwanta ragyud - Black Widow

The statement acknowledges that this is already a known problem and implies that there is little control or influence over the situation. However, the response encourages individuals to accept the reality of the situation and to keep pushing forward despite the challenges. It implies that the best course of action is to deal with the lack of classrooms and continue making efforts to improve the situation, indicating a resilient and determined mindset.

According to Octavia, Ismiyati, and Sholikah (2020). School facilities become one of the factors in supporting student learning achievement and teacher performance. Therefore, learning achievements can be improved through improved school facilities. Thus, it is able to improve the school quality.

The lack of classrooms poses significant challenges for students across the globe. It hampers their access to quality education and creates overcrowded learning environments, leading to reduced engagement and hindered academic progress. In order to cope with this issue, students can adopt several strategies.

In conclusion, students demonstrate remarkable flexibility in addressing the challenges posed by unstable internet connections during online learning. They actively search for reliable signal or data connectivity in different locations, and they are resourceful in seeking assistance from neighbors through the use of personal Wi-Fi networks as a temporary solution. The flexibility exhibited by students highlights their determination to overcome obstacles and maintain a smooth online learning experience despite the limitations imposed by unstable internet connections.

Sub-Theme 2.3. Well-being at its Finest

"Naghisgot man ko atong init no, kuan akong marecommend nga solution kay magdala lang jud mog paypay or tubig." – SuperGirl

Due to the hot weather, students take the initiative to bring their own fan and water to cope with the heat. They are taking their own responsibility for their own comfort and well-being during their time at school. Also, when heading out or going to comfort rooms, students are finding alternative solutions to shield themselves from heat by borrowing umbrellas from their classmates.

Summer heat has the potential to negatively affect student learning, as studies have shown that high temperatures in laboratory settings had negative effects on cognitive abilities (Cho, 2017). Similarly, high temperatures can make students feel uncomfortable, sweaty, and make it difficult to concentrate on the lesson in face-to-face class. With that, students tend to bring water to help regulate body temperature and prevent dehydration and utilize fan or personal cooling devices which provide relief to students.

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In conclusion, the hot weather can have a significant impact on student comfort and their ability to concentrate during face-to-face classes. However, students are taking their own initiative to cope with the heat and ensure their comfort and well-being at school. By bringing their own fans and water, students are proactively addressing the issue of high temperatures.

Sub-Theme 2.4. Efficient in Travel Planning

"Akong gibuhat para ma overcome ang lisod nga sakay kay mag maxim nalang ko para dali ko ma uli."– Black Widow

To overcome the problem of heavy traffic and difficulty in transportation, students utilize transportation service applications such as Maxim to get home faster. By utilizing such applications, students can bypass traffic, access efficient routes and potentially reduce their travel time.

According to Siuhi et al (2016), significant usage of smart mobile applications can be potentially very beneficial, particularly in automobile travel mode, to reduce travel time, cost, and vehicle emissions. In the end, this would make travel safer and living environments greener and healthier. Smart mobile applications can provide real-time traffic information, alternative routes, and navigation assistance, helping individuals optimize their travel routes. This is particularly valuable for students who commute to school or college, as it allows them to reach their destinations faster and potentially save time for other activities.

In conclusion, the utilization of transportation service applications, such as Maxim, by students presents a promising solution to the challenges of heavy traffic and transportation difficulties. By using these smart mobile applications, students can bypass traffic congestion, access efficient routes, and potentially reduce their travel time.

Sub-Theme 2.5. Resourcefulness

"I contact nalang ang teacher para magkasinabot mo. Like mu ask og pila ka minutes kay mubyahe pa padong uli kay interact lang sa teacher dili kay mag sge nalnag kag reklamo" - Super Girl

This statement suggested that communicating and interacting with teachers is crucial for fostering a healthy and productive learning environment. When we engage in proactive communication, we take the initiative to reach out to teachers, share information, seek clarification, and build a strong relationship with them. This approach can yield several benefits for both students and teachers alike.

Similarly, to the study of Xie and Derakhshan (2022), teachers and students with main concepts in instructional communication and their role as the main pillar of successful teaching and learning processes. To this aim, by drawing on the positive psychology movement and the rhetorical and relational goal theory in instructional communication, we argue that positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors are facilitators of a wide range of desirable student-related academic outcomes.

It is important to have a proactive approach of reaching out to the instructor and engaging in a dialogue to seek clarity on the preferred format for conducting classes. This interaction aims to gather information and receive guidance regarding the mode of instruction, such as whether the classes will be conducted in person or online.

"naa man tay library mangeta nalang ta way kay karon baya modern na baya ta" - Storm

Storm suggested that students should utilize the library and access modern resources for self-learning because libraries provide a wide range of authoritative materials, while modern resources offer convenience and flexibility. By leveraging these resources, students can gain in-depth knowledge and stay updated with the rapid advancements in various fields

According to Rashid and Asghar (2016), the widespread technology use among current college and university students has made higher educational institutions worldwide acknowledge the need of incorporating it in teaching and learning for explicit reasons. Use of technology has a direct positive relationship with students' engagement and self-directed learning; however, no significant direct effect was found between technology use and academic performance.

Utilization of the library and exploring modern ways to enhance the research process. The library serves as a valuable resource center where you can access a wide range of scholarly materials, including books, journals, and databases. However, in an era driven by technology, it is also essential to explore and leverage modern tools and techniques. This may include utilizing online databases, digital libraries and search engines.

Sub-Theme 2.6. Single-Mindedness

"Dapat naa kay focus when it comes to online" - Green Arrow

Green Arrow suggested that in online classes, maintaining a sense of focus is crucial. It refers to the ability to concentrate and engage fully in the virtual learning environment. This requires minimizing distractions, setting clear goals, and actively participating in discussions or activities. A strong sense of focus helps maximize learning outcomes and ensures an effective online learning experience.

According to the study of Villegas, Ortiz, Camacho, Navarrete (2023), E-learning has revolutionized the way students learn by offering access to quality education in a model that does not depend on a specific space and time. However, due to the e-learning method where no tutor can directly control the group of students, they can be distracted for various reasons, which greatly affects their learning capacity.

In online classes, it becomes crucial for students to cultivate a heightened sense of focus and concentration. Unlike traditional classroom settings, online learning environments can be prone to distractions and require increased self-discipline. By prioritizing focus, students can actively engage in their coursework, actively participate in discussions, and absorb the material effectively.

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Theme 3. ADVOCACY OF EDUC HEROES

Suggestions were made by students to give advice on how to overcome the challenges on blended learning modality. Various recommendations are shared to help students conquer these challenges. Sub-Theme 3.1. Persistence

"Kung init kay magdala og tubig og paypay that's the least nga mabuhat nato. Dili nalang ta seg reklamo. Kay kung naglisod ta, naglisod pod sila" dapat musabot pod ta og kayanon lang gyud nato hantod mo graduate ta. - Super Girl

Bringing an umbrella and water was recommended by the students in order to avoid dehydration and to avoid being more exposed to the heat of the sun. They will just accept what they have from the school and stop complaining about their struggles as long as they can finish studying and graduate with the degree that they want.

Finding ways and doing what it takes for a student to get to the goal is being persistent. Whether they have experienced good moments and even bad moments, they still move on and do what they need to do in order to succeed. Being persistent does not really relate to the character or personality of a person, it is how a person would work on the struggles independently. There are clear paths that can inspire a student to become persistent, and these are to embrace self - efficacy, destigmatize help, and redefine failure (Western Governors University, 2022). These paths could really make a student realize that persistence is one of the keys to the goal that they want to achieve. This will serve as their gas in order to graduate and get the degree that they want to have in the future.

The statement shows that persistence is one of the keys that the students can achieve their goal, and it will help them resolve the struggles that they faced since they will come up with the alternatives and resolutions that the struggles can be resolved. Complaining about the struggles that they faced will not help them, instead of complaining, they must think of how they can alternately avoid or resolve the struggle that they faced for their dream degree.

Sub-Theme 3.2. Productivity Management

"Time management kay lisod man jud labi nagdili ka kahibaw muorganize sa imong kaugalingon. Dapat naa kay time limits gani sa imoha sad kay dili ra baya ang pagskwela ang imong priorities. Naa sad baya kay lain priorities so dapat kabalo ka mumanage sa imong time"

"kasagaran sa akong classmate ron kay daghan jud ma late so dapat masayo jud silag mata" - Green Arrow

Students practiced time management in order for them to fulfill the requirements that they have in class. Especially those working students, they really practiced time management so that there will be no conflict of their time when it comes to work and studying.

Like our money and energy, time needs also to be managed in order for us to have an organized errand. There are some important skills that a student should have to manage their time effectively. These skills are goals - setting, prioritization, organization, and managing stress. These skills would help a student to manage their time and organize their tasks in a day.

The statement shows the preparatory measures that a student should have. Since blended learning is being implemented at this time. Whether a student is a full-time student or a working student, time management is still very vital for both students so that they can do the things that they need to do and needs to be done ahead of time (Auld, 2023b).

Time management was one the recommendation for students that are currently working as it enables them to balance their academic and work responsibilities effectively. By prioritizing tasks or creating efficient schedules, students can optimize their productivity and successfully fulfill their obligation both in school and at work.

Sub-Theme 3.3 Positivism

"Positive lang gyud para eyang career ma successful"
"Dapat padayon lang gyud sila and then di sila mu focus sa mga problema" - (Star Fire)

Students suggested that everyone should keep on going, do not focus on problems. Students should focus on the positive side of life and never give up. It signifies by being a resilient and optimistic mindset. By adopting these attitudes, students can navigate challenges more effectively and maintain motivation which can help them achieve their academic and personal goals.

Having a positive attitude or thinking is really important as a student. Students should keep in mind that every adversity is a road to multiple opportunities and by facing those challenges, students will be able to open their doors from the opportunities ahead of those challenges. Students should focus on their goals and not get distracted by various priorities and responsibilities. If a student gets stressed, they can talk to their family, peers, and faculty advisors (Today, n.d.-b).

The statement shows that thinking about the bright side of all the challenges that the students face will make them still motivated to move forward and do what they need to do in order to succeed and get the goal that they want to achieve. Every challenge and failure have lessons that can be learned by the students, and those lessons can be applied to the next opportunity to succeed, make corrections and improve.

Sub-Theme 3.4. Play On (Taking advantage of free WIFI

"Good thing to siya pero dapat i disseminate kay naay uban students nga wala kabalo nga naay free wifi kay para og wala silay load gyud na naa ray free wifi diri"- (Super Girl)

In the statement, the informant expressed that it is a good thing to have free WiFi available. However, she suggested that this information should be disseminated or shared with other students who may not be aware of its existence. They believe that some students may not know that free WiFi is available and may rely solely on their mobile data, which can be costly and limited. By spreading awareness about the presence of free WiFi, Super Girl hopes to help those students who may not have access to a stable internet connection and alleviate the burden of using their load or mobile data for online activities. The informant emphasizes the importance of making sure that all students are informed and have equal opportunities to access the free WiFi service.

Based on the academic journal of Reglitz (2020), internet connection should be a basic right for all the people. The luxury of accessing vast information that can be used in learning should not be limited to people who can afford it. Everyone should have the right to access the internet free of charge. Hence, dissemination of free wifi accessibility among schools should be a necessity to inform students that money is not a disadvantage in accessing the internet. (Reglitz, 2020)

Taking advantage of free WIFI at the campus can be incredibly valuable as it allows students to access the internet for their school-related activities, such as research, online assignments or communication with classmates or teachers.

Sub-Theme 3.5. Perseverance

"I suggest sa student's kay perseverance" - Super Girl

Super Girl suggested that having perseverance despite the challenges faced in blended learning. She emphasized that not everything that we want can be given to us. That's why students must persevere and keep going despite the difficulties and discomforts of blended learning modality.

In a study of Hernández et al. (2020), it was found out how perseverance can shape students' motivation. This motivation leads to a student's improvement in academic performance. This means that with perseverance, students can still overcome the problem despite the challenges. (Hernández et al., 2020)

With the response of Super Girl and the study of Hernández et al. (2020), perseverance is a significant characteristic that a student should have. The ability to motivate oneself by keep going despite of the challenges and difficulties experienced by the students.

Sub-Theme 3.6. Practicality on solving problems

"Katong kulang sa mga books, for example, sa mga reporting, mag ready nalang gyud daan Kay naa man jud nay ipangsend ang mga teacher nga expected nga mga buhatonon"- Black Widow

Being ready and doing the initiatives to be prepared in activities that the teacher will give is being emphasized by Black Widow. There are some links and files that the teachers will be sending to the class, and students must download and keep it for study purposes since it will be the basis of the activity that will be given by the teacher.

The ability of the student to learn on their own through short, simple quizzes or instructions is where readiness can be found from the student. Students will be able to explore their ways of comprehending the instruction and do their task with the knowledge that they have (Kirwan, 2021).

The statement shows the readiness and resourcefulness of the students in order for them to have an output in class activities. Doing the things that can help the students learn and produce an output for requirements will make them have a good grade and performance from the class. Being ready in possible activities and studying ahead of time will result in a positive outcome and better performance of the student. With that, the confidence and motivation of the student to be more resourceful will continue and they will be able to boost their self-confidence.

Conclusion

Mandaue City College introduced blended learning offering both face-to-face and online classes for third and fourth-year students. However, challenges arose in both modes. Face-to-face classes faced issues like poor facilities, transportation problems, and financial struggles, affecting students' learning experience. Online classes suffered from late information dissemination, poor connectivity, teacher inactivity, and environmental distractions, hindering student performance. Despite these challenges, students coped through resourcefulness, preparedness, and efficiency in managing their well-being. They recommended having persistence, avoiding procrastination, staying positive, and utilizing available resources, emphasizing the importance of adaptability and problem-solving in managing blended learning challenges.

Limitations and Further Research

The study offers recommendations to address challenges in blended learning at Mandaue City College. These include raising funds and collaborating for equipment, using alternative connectivity options, considering alternative transportation methods, maintaining communication with teachers, creating a syllabus, allowing asynchronous activities, minimizing environmental distractions, advocating for future quantitative research, and enhancing the learning environment for students. Additionally, the study advocates for future research using quantitative methods to delve deeper into specific challenges, thereby strengthening understanding and impact assessment. Implementing these recommendations is expected to enhance the learning environment for students.

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APPENDIX A – RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Interview Guide Questions

The participants will be asked the following questions regarding the study entitled "Exploring the Academic Challenges of Students in Blended Learning Modality." Additionally, the researchers will ensure that the participants clearly understand why the study is conducted and will guarantee the confidentiality of the gathered responses.
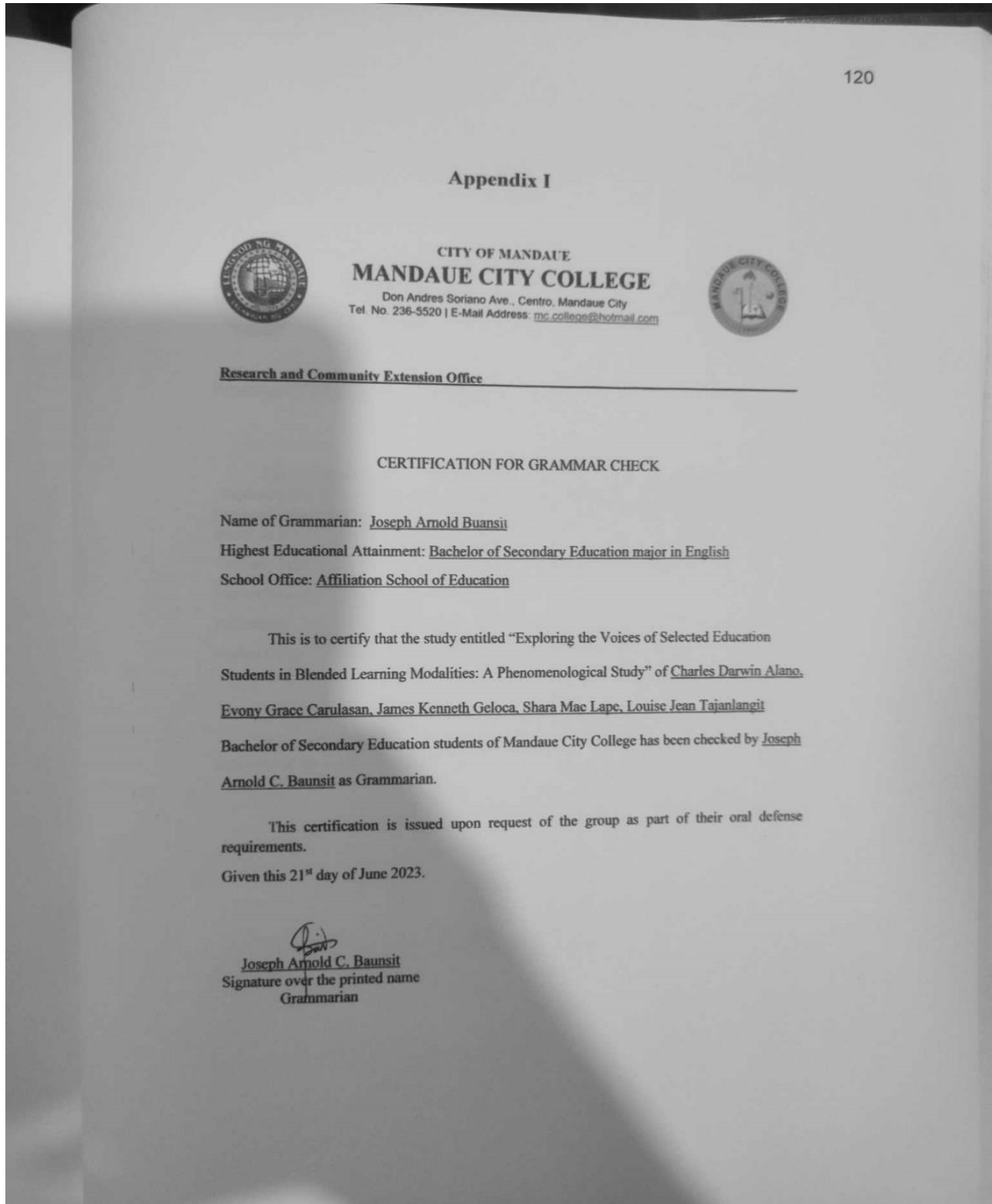
Guide Questions:

1. What are the challenges that you experienced in the blended learning modality?
2. What did you do to overcome those challenges?
    2.1. What specific actions did you do to cope up with the challenges?
3. What can you recommend so that these kinds of experiences can be easier and less intimidating for you?
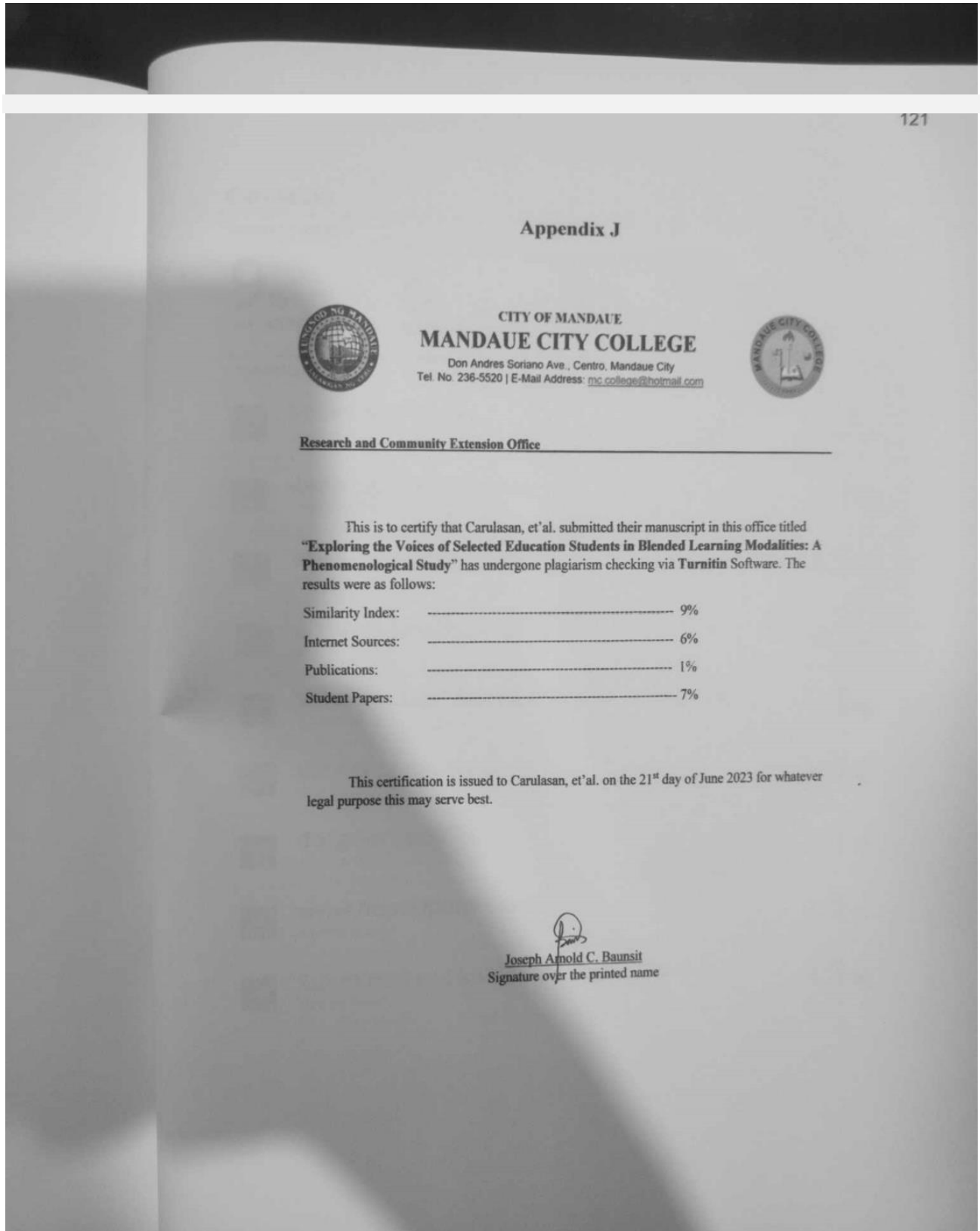
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APPENDIX B - PLAGIARISM CHECK CERTIFICATION

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Appendix I

CITY OF MANDAUE
MANDAUE CITY COLLEGE
Don Andres Soriano Ave., Centro, Mandaue City
Tel. No. 236-5520 | E-Mail Address: mc.college@hotmail.com

Research and Community Extension Office

CERTIFICATION FOR GRAMMAR CHECK

Name of Grammarian: Joseph Arnold Buansit

Highest Educational Attainment: Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English

School Office: Affiliation School of Education

This is to certify that the study entitled "Exploring the Voices of Selected Education Students in Blended Learning Modalities: A Phenomenological Study" of Charles Darwin Alano, Evony Grace Carulasan, James Kenneth Geloca, Shara Mae Lape, Louise Jean Tajanlangit Bachelor of Secondary Education students of Mandaue City College has been checked by Joseph Arnold C. Baunsit as Grammarian.

This certification is issued upon request of the group as part of their oral defense requirements.

Given this 21st day of June 2023.

Joseph Arnold C. Baunsit
Signature over the printed name
Grammarian

APPENDIX C- GRAMMAR CHECK CERTIFICATION

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Appendix J

CITY OF MANDAUE
MANDAUE CITY COLLEGE
Don Andres Soriano Ave., Centro, Mandaue City
Tel. No. 236-5520 | E-Mail Address: mc.college@hotmail.com

Research and Community Extension Office

This is to certify that Carulasan, et'al. submitted their manuscript in this office titled **"Exploring the Voices of Selected Education Students in Blended Learning Modalities: A Phenomenological Study"** has undergone plagiarism checking via **Turnitin** Software. The results were as follows:

Similarity Index:	9%
Internet Sources:	6%
Publications:	1%
Student Papers:	7%

This certification is issued to Carulasan, et'al. on the 21ˢᵗ day of June 2023 for whatever legal purpose this may serve best.

Joseph Arnold C. Baunsit
Signature over the printed name