

Virtual Learning In A State University In The Philippines: Perspectives From The Education Students

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article History</p> <p>Received: May 09, 2021</p> <p>Accepted: October 12, 2021</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords : Virtual Learning, Phenomenology, Perspectives, Pandemic</p> <p>DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.5565139</p>	<p><i>The study explored the stories and experiences of the students in a state university who are under the virtual learning modality. The study participants are third-year Bachelor of Elementary Education students who have been experiencing the new normal setup under virtual learning. The researchers used purposive sampling to recruit 10 participants. Strategies to address study credibility include verbatim transcription and saturation of data, and then it is coded and analyzed for patterns and themes to identify the essence of participant's experiences. The study revealed that the COVID 19 Pandemic had brought inevitable changes, especially in the field of education, which affected the experiences of college students in a state university, which plunged into this new educational setup. The study recommends that the government must build a stable and faster internet connection accessible to all students. Doing so helps save the students' financial expenses and makes virtual learning more engaging, lively, efficient, economical, and more importantly, bridging the gap between students and teachers.</i></p>

Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak spreads rapidly worldwide, leading to a dramatic loss of human life and brings unprecedented threats, risks, and challenges. The government has taken measures to counteract this disease's spreading and transmission, including travel restrictions, social distancing, and social gathering prohibition, including schools and universities closure and lockdown. These measures hurt business, tourism, health, and education. The COVID 19 has brought inevitable changes, most especially in the field of education. It has resulted in schools shut across the world, and globally, over 1.2 billion learners are out of the classroom, and 28 million are from the Philippines (UNESCO, 2020). With this sudden shift away from the classroom settings, educators think of innovative ways to pursue learning even in the pandemic surge. They have come up with various learning modalities that include switching and adopting virtual learning, whereby teaching is undertaken remotely in digital educational platforms (World Economic Forum, 2020). Virtual learning is a functional classroom environment without the traditional classroom (Simonson & Schlosser, 2006). It is a learning experience through the use of computers and internet facilities. While the instruction takes place in an online environment and the teaching activities are carried out online, the teacher and the students are physically separated in location, time, or both (Racheva, 2017).

The COVID 19 PANDEMIC exposes the inadequacies and inequities in our educational systems—from access to the internet connection and computers needed for online education and the supportive environments necessary to focus on learning and the misalignment between resources and needs (Schleicher, 2020). Especially those learners in the marginalized groups, who don't have access to digital learning resources or lack the resilience and engagement to learn on their own, are at risk of falling behind (Schleicher, 2020). The implementation of virtual learning poses problems for students with limited internet access, no gadgets, and the poor. According to the report of Akamai (2017), the Philippines has the slowest internet connectivity in Asia. Besides, the quality of online education is another peculiar concern. It has also raised by the higher education sector's movement the value of online learning due to limited or inadequate access to technology (Anderson et Al., 2020). Still, it has also presented numerous concerns about the quality of online learning.

The researchers believe that virtual learning gives off different learning experiences to the students. This modality raised various issues and concerns and since this modality assumes a vast part of the students learning. Likewise, the researchers would like to solicit human experiences being encountered by the students in this type of learning. The researchers would like to find out what the students are going through in the virtual learning environment.

Methods and Materials

The study utilized the phenomenological approach, specifically the hermeneutic phenomenological method of inquiry. The study explored the experiences and stories of the students in this virtual learning environment in the

COVID Pandemic. Moreover, the researchers used hermeneutic method since this study aims to understand and interpret the complexity of the students' lived experiences in this virtual learning modality. This understanding was, in turn, aimed at raising awareness and finding the meanings surrounding the phenomenon.

Furthermore, the participants in this study were ten (10) college students enrolled in Cebu Technological University Naga Extension Campus undergoing the virtual learning modality. Also, the participants were at least twenty (20) years old. The researchers used a purposive sampling method wherein criteria were utilized to select the study participants in choosing the sample participants. This criterion included: must be a Filipino citizen and must be enrolled in a state university. In addition, the number of participants was determined using data saturation.

To analyze the data, the researchers made use of the Colaizzi Method. Colaizzi's (1978) a seven-step process provides a rigorous analysis, staying close to the data. It provides a concise description of the phenomenon under study, validated by the participants who created it. The method may come from face-to-face interviews but can also be done in multiple other ways; written narratives, online interviews, etc.

Ethical Consideration

The ethical considerations of the study are based on the Belmont Report of 1974, which has three rudimentary ethical principles in research that involved humans as subjects, including respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The belief of Respect for Person encompassed two ethical philosophies. First, individuals should be treated as independent agents, and second, persons with reduced autonomy are qualified for protection. In the study, the participants may or may not answer the questions asked, which is according to their preference. That is why there are no rules on how much they should answer; they are given the liberty to deal with the questions asked. Furthermore, there are no students or children involved. Informed consent was provided to the informants containing the purpose of the study, the potential risks and benefits of the study, contact persons in emergency cases, the extent of how the data will be kept confidential, and a statement stating that the respondent participated in the study voluntarily.

Results

This section presents the data gathered using interviews and observations. After data saturation point was reached, thematic analysis was utilized to interpret the data collected using coding.

Theme 1. Utilizing Technology in Learning

The first theme of the study is utilizing technology in learning. Participants have given their description of virtual learning based on the experiences they have gone through in this learning modality. One participant stated that virtual learning involves a computer, and a virtual resource room was utilized.

“For me, virtual learning has to do with computer man nu, one of the processes to enhance learning experience so karontungods pandemic wherein we use the virtual resource room which is student-centered” (Participant 3)

Another participant stated that virtual learning falls under distance learning, and it uses forms of technology. Students and teachers will be visible on the screen.

“So for me, ang virtual learning is under nasiyasa distance learning but then it uses forms of technology like laptop, cellphone. And then dilinimomakita personal ang instructor kay naa ra siyamakitasa screen.” (Participant 4)

In addition, another participant noted that learning is continued with the different forms of technology and with the online platforms.

“For me, virtual learning is when the learning continues in the means of technological advancement such as online videos, educational tools and online tools such as Edmodo, google meet and google classroom.” (Participant 6)

Theme 2: Poor Internet Connection

The second theme of the study is a poor internet connection which is considered as one of the main problems or concerns in this modality. One participant shares that virtual learning is not easy when it comes to internet connection. The participant shared her experience of not being able to take the examination due to internet interferences.

“grabenghilaknakoatokatongnitakekog exam namoanangadlawawala ko kaapil kay walay internet, grabenakonghilakato sus nakaingonjudkog sus kanus-a pamannimubalik ang face to face oy kay alakansikaymingtagabukid” (Participant 2)

Moreover, one participant shares her encountered difficulty in a subject demonstration due to signal interferences.

“ugkatongnagdemo ko sa social studies ngaigo ra kongnaka explain human walana, walana ko kasud kay wamay internet, maogyudnaakongmasulti sus kadugayba ani

magface to face classes oy alakansiyudkaymingtagabukid kana kay hinay man ang internet saatoagud.” (Participant 2)

Another participant expressed that signal interferences affected everything. In and out scenario during classes is inevitable.

“Aside from that sad ang nakaapan sad kay ang signal kay once man gud and signal na ang magproblema, ma-apektuhanjudtanan. So example, nakasud ko ana nga certain ngaklasetaposnaout ko kay walay signal, then igbaliknakowana ko kahibawo kung unsanailanggitabian” (Participant 4)

Theme 3: Unavailability of Learning Tools

The third theme of the study is the unavailability of learning tools. Some students don't have gadgets that are to be used in this modality. One participant noted that not all students have complete devices to be utilized in this setup.

“kaning virtual kay muragmaglisodpajud ka kay labinadilitananggaestudyantenaay stable nga connection, dilitananstudyante complete ug gamitsaskuylabanga virtual.” (Participant 4)

Moreover, another participant noted that she is using the neighbor's computer because her cellphone lags every time she uses it.

“Usahay mu attend ko'gklasenaako phone ang gamit or sahaymuadto kos silingannamo para maki use sailahang computer kay lagi mu lag akong phone” (Participant 6)

In addition, another participant shares that utilizing cellphone in the virtual learning modality is not enough and a having a laptop is a necessity.

“Kasagaranbiyanatoron ang gamiton is laptop kay dili enough kung cellphone ra ang gamitlabinasa thesis nato, as in sagol-sagolnatanan.” (Participant 10)

Theme 4: Hindrances in Communicating with the teacher

The fourth theme in the study is about the hindrances in communicating with the teacher. It is concerned with the student's approach to the teachers, asking queries and clarifying vague parts of the lessons. One participant noted that approaching the teacher in the face-to-face setup is easy, while approaching the teacher in this virtual learning modality is challenging.

“Sa face to face man gud, we can easily approach the teacher which is at the front nanimonana ang teacher ngamangutana ka like mas ma explain nila ug tarong kay naa man ka, then maka hands-on sad sila kung unsa man gani ang mas walanimonasabtan kay saari man gud ka sa virtual learning gudngadilininimosilamakita kung unsajudmismo ang ilang I explain nyausahay sad magputol-putol sad ilahang signal, so dilijudmatarong ug deliver.” (Participant 1)

Furthermore, another participant shares an experience that questions in the face-to-face setup is directly responded. At the same time, students became reliant with their classmates' response in the virtual learning setup.

“Lastly, kung naakoypangutananganaa ko sabalay, wala mag-paabot ra ko sa response saakongmga classmate, saakongmaestra unlike sanaay social interaction kay unlike sa face to face kay matubaggyud, direct to the point gyud ang unsay imongipangutana.” (Participant 2)

In addition, another participant shares that there is an easy interaction between groupmates, and classmates while there's a difficulty in approaching the teacher in virtual learning set up.

“Unlike sa face to face, parehaanangmga group activity, maka interact gyud ta saatongmga groupmates, classmates, saatongteachers kung naatay concerns makaduol ra gyud ta niladayon. Wherein karonnga virtual learning, lisodkaayona, lisod man gani tag approach samgateachers kay silapuddaghan sad silagbuhaton.” (Participant 3)

Theme 5: Group Activities

The fifth theme in this study is group activities that talk about how students interact with their group, and how they can communicate with each other. One participant noted that communication is being done through Group Chats for them to connect with their members. Different time availability is considered a challenge as well.

“Sa among groupings sad kay naajudmiy GC, dali ra judmaka-communicate basta naa lang juy GC which is one way sad siya para maka connect sa lain pudnga member. Sa GC man gud is maghuwatpamansila kung kinsaymuuna kay puros lage busy, ang muuna kay mao may mu leader.” (Participant 1)

Moreover, another participant noted that group interactions and communication are being done through messenger, group chat, and even Google meetings. Availability of time is also a concern.

"We interact through messenger, maghimo ug group chat og meeting sa google meet. It's tough to interact with my classmates kay ang uban man gudkaronsa virtual learning is dilimagka timing ang ang time na mag online" (Participant 7)

In addition, another participant noted that virtual meetings are being done in various ways like messenger, group chats, text messages and calls. Several ways in informing the members on the division of tasks are also stated.

"We communicate through social media like the messenger, group chats ug kung di available ang usanamo kay mangita lang jud ug way like mutext kung dilisya online, manawag para e inform silanamaoni ang atongbuhaton." (Participant 10)

Theme 6: Difficulty Comprehending Lessons

The sixth theme in this study is difficulty comprehending lessons that tackled how students absorbed the lessons being taught, the effectiveness of virtual learning is also included. One participant noted that she has a hard time understanding lessons in the virtual education setup.

"Honest lang disadvantage kay maglisodjudkog sabot sad sa virtual. Kay saface to facemaglisod ko samotna sad jud kaha sa virtual learning." (Participant 1)

Moreover, another participant noted that she has difficulty learning through cellphone or learning through watching pre-recorded videos.

"Sa akong part kay muragmaglisodjud ko makat-on through cellphone lang gani or magtan-aw lang ug mga like muraraman sad nisiyag video discussion samaestra kay of course nigamit ug technology" (Participant 3)

Furthermore, another participant expressed her experience submitting activities just for the sake of compliance and not for learning.

"Whenever ang mga teacher mag ask bitaw to do some task or work, like paperworks, ako kay mupass lang ko even though walakoynakat-unan, ako ra gyaponsiyangipass for the sake of compliance lang, di lang siya for the sake of learning." (Participant 4)

Theme 7 Economic Issues

The seventh theme of this study is economic issues that tackle the students' challenge of the students in terms of load expenses. One participant shares her experience of being absent in class due to a load deficit.

"lisod man gudkaayogkanangwalakoy load kay 1 week usahay kay di jud ko makasud ana gyud as in 1 week" (Participant 1)

Furthermore, another participant responded that one of her problems was mobile data deficit which causes inaccessibility to activities and tasks that needs to be done.

"Ang ako lang jungproblemausahaykaningwalatay load, kinahanglan pa ka mugastogsingkwenta kay para makapaload ka, kay kung dili ka paload waka kahibawoba unsay imongbuhatunon" (Participant 4)

Moreover, another participant noted her encounter of absences due to financial instability and not being able to buy a load.

"Also, if naggamit ra ug data, if walaypangloadusahay di ka-attend kay walalagikwartapangload." (Participant 6)

Though virtual learning has presented economic issues, it is also undeniable that this learning modality has an advantage when we speak of reduced financial costs. This type of learning has advantages also compared to physical learning because it eliminates the cost of transportation, and meals of the students. Additionally, the materials needed for study are available online making the learning environment paperless that makes more affordable and beneficial.

One participant shared that she only spent money for load and data, unlike in face-to-face setup that she needs to pay cash for both fare and expenses for printing learning materials.

"And then for the student, so dilinalang sad silakinahanglannga mag gastobitaw, ang ilanalangmagasto kay load kay before ang sauna magastopagplite, magasto pa ug paprintsaunsa pa nangamgakuan, magasto pa ug mgagamit para makahimo lang ana" (Participant 4)

One participant expressed that virtual learning lessens the expense in terms of fare, you only spend money for load.

"Then, muragmaka save save man sad siguro gamay sa allowance, kay sauna tagaan ta silbiamoa Sangat raman, tagaan ko sakong mama ug 150 karon kay muragiyangmagastonalang kay load loadnalangba, magpload ra baya kung naay virtual meeting ana." (Participant 3)

Furthermore, another participant considered less financial expenses as an advantage in this set up. She added that she will not be spending bigger amount of money daily, and the expense is only the load and data.

"Pero advantage sad syasaakoa kay less naakongbayranan kay pag face-to-face class nagboarding house man ko atoperokaronnaanalangabalay. Advantage sad sya"

kay dilinadako ang allowance namagasto daily, mugasto ra ka sapangload, so dakodakopudko'g ma save financially in virtual learning.” (Participant 8)

Theme 8. Time Management

Theme 8 in this study is time management which tackles students' problems in time management in this virtual learning set up.

One participant noted that she no longer has time to do the activities given by the teacher due to household chores.

“Muhatag ang teacher ug mga activities then walanakay time kay lagenaa kay nabuhatngamgabuhatonsabalay, then muragnatunganagani.” (Participant 5)

In addition, another participant considers time management as a challenge in virtual learning due to difficulties in submitting activities and hectic schedule.

“Akongpagmanagesa time nako. Mao ni one of the challenges naakongna encounter sa virtual learning karon kay naglisodnako'g manage sakong time tungodsa ka busy pagatimansamgadapatipangsubmitnato, labina hectic nakaayo ang schedule. Maglisodnako'g manage, magsigeko'ghunahuna kung unsay dapatunahon ug buhat.” (Participant 10)

Theme 9. Teachers' Behavior

The ninth theme of the study is the teacher's behavior which involves how the teacher understands the student's different situations. This will also include how the teachers use their time in class and how consistent they are in following their schedules. One participant shares an experience about the teacher's inconsideration of the situation of the students. Some teachers tend to forget students whose home is situated in mountainous areas.

“Unya aside from that pud, I don't think so ngatanangga teacher kay mu-consider bitaw because naa man guy ubangga mu-nag jud ug students to finish their work even if dilibitaw kay hala ang batanaasabukid, kinahanglanjudngaaningorasamapassjudnila, dilisilamutan-aw banga ang batanagpuyosabukid.” (Participant 4)

Moreover, one participant considers teachers who do not follow their schedules a challenge since inconsistent schedules may cause piled activities.

“Para nako, ang pinakachallengegyud kay kana bitawng teachers ngadilibitawmagdumdomsailang schedule, so and tendency gud ana kay ang imongmahimo kana bitawng nag-una, so mag abot-abotnasiya kay naa may ubangga teachers ngabisagdiliilahang time, muhatagjudsilagmgabuhatunon.” (Participant 4)

Also, another participant noted that some teachers will not use the allotted time and will not finish the time during meetings.

“Our other teachers dilinilahumanon or hutdon ug gamitilangorassaklase in some meetings. Pananglitanilang time kay 4 hours pero ang uban teachers kutob ra 2 hours ilangpagmeetnato” (Participant 10)

Theme 10. Independent and Self-Directed

The tenth theme in this study is independent learning as an advantage in this setup. This tackles the varied experiences of students in this modality. One participant noted that virtual learning enabled her to learn at her own time and pace. She can study independently without relying on her classmates, groupmates, and teachers as well.

“I can learn at my own time and pace, makatuon ko independently without magsaligsakongmga classmate sa groupmates, magsaligsamaestra.” (Participant 2)

Furthermore, another participant shares that virtual learning encourages students to learn on their own even without the assistance and guidance of the teacher.

“As for me it really encouraging gyudnako to learn on my own then makaingon ko ngamaindependentgyud ang studyante or kita kay labiwalay assistance sa teacher, walay guidance sa teacher everytimemaghimo ta saatong activities” (Participant 5)

Additionally, another participant expresses the beauty of virtual learning as training in becoming an independent learner. She elaborated that being an independent is helpful in the chosen course.

“The beauty of virtual learning set up is ma practice man nato or ma train ta namahimong independent learner. Being independent learner is very useful labina'g college level ta unya ang atongkurso kay education. So dapatmapracticejudnato being independent. We can construct our own learning, our own experiences” (Participant 9)

Theme 11: Convenience and Comfort

The last theme in this study is convenience and comfort while learning. It tackles the advantage of the students in terms of comfortability while learning in this setup.

One participant noted that this learning model gives you ample time for the family, enables you to help with the household chores, and enables you to have sideline business while learning.

“Then sa virtual learning sad, nindotsiya kay mas naapakay time sa family, naa ra ka sabalay ug makatabang ka samga household chores, makatabang ka samgabuhatnon, pwedepud ka maka sideline ug panindanaarakasainyo.” (Participant 1)

In addition, one participant says that learning virtually has the advantage of giving more time to do assignments in the comfort of one’s home. Routines in the face-to-face are altered in this new setup.

“In this mode of learning you have time to relax and more time to do the assignment in your own comfort and there is no need to wake early to go to school kay kana sad usa sad nanga malate kagmata kay pwede ra dugaykaykamumata kay naa ra nagsalig ka nga ang klasenaarasinyoha” (Participant 2)

Furthermore, one participant elaborated that having access in getting in for meetings is an advantage. You can attend the class wherever you are.

“Ang advantage savitualkahbisagasa ko muadtomaka attend rakosaklase which is different from the face-to-face classes kay sa school rajudimongpadulngan ug mu-attend ka’g class.” (Participant 6)

Discussion

The COVID 19 Pandemic has brought inevitable changes, especially in education which affects the experiences and encounters of college students in a state university as they plunged into this new educational setup. As seen in the study findings, virtual learning utilized technology such as laptops, cellphones, the internet, and educational platforms or websites. A learning experience through the use of computers and/or the internet both outside and inside the school’s facilities. While the instruction takes place in an online environment and the teaching activities are carried out online that makes the teacher and learners are physically separated in terms of location, time, or both (Racheva, 2020). In addition, online learning uses the internet and other essential technologies to develop materials for educational purposes, instructional delivery and program management (Fry, 2001) and one of the methods used by Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) to support traditional learning (van Rensburg, 2018). To augment the delivery of education, academicians use modern tools such as email, audio, and video teleconferencing for online learning (Schindler, Burkholder, Morad, & Marsh, 2017).

Moreover, poor internet connection is considered the biggest challenge for students in this learning setup. Most students shared their experiences of not attending classes, taking examinations, participating well in class, delivering virtual demo, and receiving choppy responses due to poor internet connection. Chantel (2002); LeLoup & Ponterio (2000) described the accessibility of the internet as the “backbone” of online learning. In the same vein, with the possible change of the delivery of lessons, the teachers must make a lot of modifications to their preparation of learning materials and the effectiveness of their delivery on having a diverse platform. Because of the utilization of technology comes the pedagogical challenges related to the implementation of eLearning, participation and acceptance rate from the learners should be less of a concern than how the school will handle the development of the learning environment to guarantee better learning of the students (Garcia, 2017).

In addition, the unavailability of learning tools is also considered a challenge in this modality. The majority of the students do not have gadgets that support online learning, and cell phones may not be enough for this setup. Students who access the internet through smartphones cannot take advantage of online learning because a significant amount of online content is not accessible via smartphones. (Wains & Mahmood, 2008). Even if students have access in the internet, yet using smartphones is not advantageous because significant amount of content cannot access via smartphones. A lot of reasons also affect the organizational response and the capacity of students in digital learning such as insufficient access and availability of the internet and the lack of the latest available technology.

Also, the study revealed that student-teacher interaction and communication is also a concern of most students currently taking this educational setup. Students find it hard to approach and communicate with the teacher to clarify vague parts of the lessons. Moreover, another primary concern associated in online learning is the lack of proper interaction with instructors. Additionally, any online course contents are usually discussed with the relevant course instructor by e-mail, which requires response time (Zhong, 2020). It should be noted also that teachers should be regularly available and active all the times so that they can answer promptly essential questions by the students. Otherwise, students will send questions via email, thus eliminating the opportunity for others to hear the questions and answers (Salmi, 2013)

The study also revealed that the interaction of students during group activities is also a difficulty. Students use messenger group chats to communicate with their groupmates due to varied circumstances. The inadequate opportunity for human interaction, which was considered necessary to establish peer support and develop in-depth group discussions on the subject, was a major obstacle to online learning. Britt (2011) mentioned, that there is no face-to-face communication between students in online learning. Hence, the real-time sharing of

ideas, knowledge, and information is partially missing in this mode of learning. A sense of community and social presence has been widely acknowledged to be a factor in enhancing both the quality of learning and the motivation to study (Haythornthwaite and Andrews, 2011). In establishing an online learning community, different types of interaction play an essential role. There was mainly one negative aspect brought forward: the different goals of team members and different degrees of commitment to the project and teamwork. Students found it difficult to find ways to control teamwork and influence the team's results if other team members had different views. They also complained about the difficulty to agree on timetables (Salmi, 2013). The barriers to participation that external students may experience are particularly evident in collaborative learning tasks through group work, group presentations, and group assessments (Graham & Misanchuk, 2004; Jaques & Salmon, 2007). Some of the issues experienced can be personal such as anxiety associated with using technology; being out of one's comfort zone; (perception of) inequity in assessment, particularly in "group" assignments; and, the (perceived) inability or difficulty in peer interaction, particularly in presentations. Tuckman (2007) found out that students may lack opportunities to collaborate and receive feedback and social support. These theories showed that students in online learning suffered from anxieties that lead to a lack of participation. Greenberg (1998) asserted that students in online learning often feel less pressure to perform individually, and more pressure to collaborate and be part of the team. Participation is generally low when this is not considered, and dialogue is absent (Palloff & Pratt, 2000). The theories pointed out that online learning puts pressure on students to work more in groups and requires more participation and engagement.

Furthermore, the study revealed the student's difficulty in comprehending lessons, maybe because of the difficulty adapting and adjusting to an online learning environment immediately. According to the students, the pace of learning in an online course is slower than in a classroom-based course. Students expressed the view that understanding new concepts in an online course takes longer without the immediate support of peers and teachers to proffer alternative explanations (Worall, et al, 2015). Due to the sudden change, they are not able to adapt to commuter-based learning. Students who have been always studying in the traditional classroom mindset are not able to focus on online platforms. Despite the range of ways instructors can foster student engagement, some students simply do not find a virtual classroom as engaging as a traditional one. According to New York Times, the lack of in-person communication can become problematic for students who are struggling to understand the course material.

Moreover, the study revealed that students are struggling with financial instability in this virtual learning though the only expense is mobile data. Students tend to be absent in class due to load deficit and financial instability. Students did not have a computer, and an identical proportion had to rely on prepaid mobile data for connectivity. Not having money to buy mobile data greatly affects students attending classes. Although virtual learning poses a challenge in financial terms, the study also revealed that virtual learning brings advantages to the students in financial terms. Virtual learning reduced the use of traveling resources and other expenses. The advantage of online learning is reduced financial costs. Online education is far more affordable as compared to physical learning. This is because online learning eliminates the cost points of student transportation, student meals, and most importantly, real estate. Additionally, all the course or study materials are available online, thus creating a paperless learning environment that is more affordable, while also being beneficial to the environment (Guatam, 2020)

In addition, the study exposed students are having a hard time dealing with time management challenges. It is undoubtedly that those students who have time management know how to plan and monitor their time. Eventually, understand relationship between time management and productivity because they know how to plan and monitor their time. They know how to chunk their tasks, prioritize subtasks, and reassess their use of time when something new comes up. Students with effective time-management skills usually do pretty well. Students expressed that managing their time and balancing school with other commitments was either "very challenging" or "somewhat challenging." Time management eclipsed every other potential issue, including preparing for exams, completing difficult assignments, and choosing classes.

Another challenge being faced by the students in this virtual learning setup is the behavior of the teachers. Teachers being inconsiderate with students' situations and inconsistency in following schedules are considered as challenges in this modality. Marks (2000) revealed that students who their teachers support have a high level of school engagement. It can be seen that teachers' attitude contribute to increasing school engagement among students.

On the other hand, the study also revealed that Virtual Learning has advantages evidenced by the student's stories. Students stated that virtual learning enables them to learn at their own time and pace. Students also emphasized independent learning as an advantage to them. The structure of an online curriculum Online curriculum structure is mostly automatic where students have more time to decide when, how, and with what contents and activities they may engage because online learning is more flexible (Khan, 2009, Milligan & Littlejohn, 2014). This flexibility requires students to monitor and adjust their behavior and actions concerning the specific learning context (Zimmerman, 2000). Students are aware of their learning responsibility instead of an external source, such as a teacher. A self-directed learner tends to actively engage in the learning processes,

such as acquiring information, planning and evaluating the learning activities. Active learning strategies can increase students' participation and improve the learning process and performance (Yilmaz, 2016).

Self-directed learners usually more actively participate in learning tasks such as reading online learning material, completing classroom tasks, planning, and evaluating milestones of learning. High-level self-management is important in SDL and learners need to adopt different strategies in dealing with various problems (Lee & Teo, 2010). Online courses are conducive to self-regulated students because they tend to use various cognitive and metacognitive strategies to accomplish their learning goal (You & Kang, 2014). Online learning allows students to work at a time and in a place that is compatible with their learning needs (Thomson, 2010). In addition, learning becomes more learner-centered since it promotes greater participation (Markova, et al., 2017).

Also, this study revealed that virtual learning brings advantages to students in terms of convenience and comfortability. There are several advantages in online learning over face-to-face and blended learning such as flexibility and accessibility to study anywhere, at any time, without requiring the physical presence in the campus (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009; Van Doorn & Van Doorn, 2014). Virtual learning requires no way less or no travel time at all and no set classroom time each day or week. Students can proactively work at their own pace and utilize the time they have available to complete assignments, readings, and research (Moore, 2014). The promise of online instruction includes ease of access for students, flexible teaching and learning approaches, and enhanced educational opportunities (Rovai, Ponton, Wighting, & Baker, 2007). Time constraints, travel costs, and conflicting work schedules are often cited as reasons for engaging in online courses. Students report positive feelings toward online courses concerning these areas, and those online classes have had a positive impact on computer skills (Cauble & Thurston, 2000).

Conclusion

The COVID-19 outbreak is a deep and sudden shock that has brought inevitable changes, especially in education. It has resulted in the sudden shift away from the face-to-face classroom setting to the adoption of virtual learning setup. The sudden switching has brought advantages that some students appreciate and recognize and brought impediments that students emphasize overcoming. Thus, it is unavoidable for all of us to help overcome and respond to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis. Opportunities and challenges presented should be grasped and taken as a serious concern. The challenge attached is to alleviate the negative impact of the crisis to a feasible extent. That is to provide and deliver the same chances of quality education for everybody amidst this trying time. The study recommends that the government should build a stable and faster internet connection accessible to all students. By doing so helps save the financial expenses of the students as well as making virtual learning more interesting, lively, accessible, economical and more importantly, bridging the gap between students and teachers.

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