



Students' Mental Health Concerns Amidst Their Academic Difficulties During Pandemic

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Abstract

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The mental health of learners is vital in ensuring that they cope and learn in times of pandemic. Currently, the number of people suffering from mental health problems is growing, especially with the global increase of Coronavirus disease cases. The psychological issues due to the pandemic have rapidly compounded the public's health burden (Torales et al., 2020). Several research studies have established the increase in the prevalence of self-reported depressive and anxiety symptoms of individuals due to the Covid-19 disease (Wang, et al., 2020). Barkham's (2019) findings on the challenges of knowledge acquisition caused by mental health issues, and the presence of total physical, mental, and social well-being theory of the World Health Organization (1948) were used as the frameworks of this study, to assess the mental health situations and academic difficulties of learners in times of pandemic. A total of 1,076 elementary to senior high school students, with their parents' consent, from a private university in Cabanatuan City participated in this study. Data gathered through Google form survey were analyzed using weighted mean, ANOVA, and T-test. Results revealed that the respondents experienced mental health concerns brought by the numerous deaths due to the Covid-19 pandemic; anxiety caused by unstable internet connection; fear of not learning using modules; and strict implementation of checkpoints. The students' academic difficulties were due to lack of internet connections; frequent power interruptions; and teachers' inability to foresee the learners' diversity in online learning. A significant difference was established in the mental health concerns of the learners according to their sex, age, and department levels. At the same time, their academic difficulties varied according to their age and department levels. A proposed program was designed as the output of the study.

Keywords: Academic Difficulties, Learning, Mental Health, Pandemic, Students



Introduction

Mental health is the state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her potentials, deals with common life stressors efficiently and effectively, and contributes to his or her community (WHO, 1986). The cases of people suffering from mental health problems are growing, especially with the global increase of cases of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The psychological issues brought by the pandemic have rapidly compounded public health around the world (Torales et al., 2020). Learners from various levels were considered the most vulnerable population during the pandemic. Researches have revealed that there is a moderate-to-severe prevalence of probable depression and anxiety symptoms among the population (Wang et al., 2020); thus, to prevent the spread of Covid-19 among the learners, schools were obliged to shift from the traditional face-to-face classroom teaching-learning into flexible and virtual learning set-up. As a consequence, several health concerns emerged among learners, such as anxiety and depression (Wang et al., 2020).

In the USA, the mental health effects of Covid-19 among college students were explored, and it was established that more than 70% of the respondents suffered from the increased occurrence of stress and anxiety (Son et al., 2020). The identified multiple stressors of the students were caused by dread and anxiety regarding their health and other family members. Another interesting result was that 91% of the respondents experienced negative impacts of the pandemic; such as attentiveness snags, sleeping pattern disturbances, diminished social interactions because of social distancing, and greater apprehensions of their academic performance. As for coping strategies, their participants pursued mental health mostly with the support of others.

Another impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in educational sectors was increased anxiety, feeling of loneliness, and depression among students closer to graduating (Lee et al., 2020). Learners reported that worrying about family members' health has an impact on the status of their mental health. Caring for the health of their family members affected their current plans, and they found it tougher to accomplish their studies at home, especially those with stressful family relationships. To manage their anxiety, solitude, and depression, the learners subjected themselves to do physical activities, while others watched television shows or movies while staying at home during the pandemic. For male students who earned minimal income, the pandemic provided them with opportunities to get employed and earn additional income while learning online.

The pandemic has a noteworthy negative influence on college students' mental health (Kecojevic, et al., 2020). College students who exhibited greater academic and life difficulties are particularly vulnerable to higher mental health distress. The Covid-19 pandemic further exacerbated existing learner problems. The duration of the pandemic has an impact on the students' academics, lives, and mental health. Thus, college health service providers and



administrators need to consider proactive measures to provide mental health support and to improve the students' well-being (Kecojevic, 2020). In addition, mental health interventions by professionally trained counselors could help students address academic and financial concerns. It is inevitable that during public health emergencies, many students have special needs, and challenges that require responsive programming by colleges arise.

In Nepal, 704 college students of Chitwan Medical College were surveyed using a web-based descriptive cross-sectional survey. The result revealed that 87% of the students were prepared for online classes in times of the pandemic and 88% utilized home internet facilities in their studies (Neupane, et al, 2020). It was revealed that female students' online class readiness is higher than male students; also the online readiness of students with the home internet accessibility is higher compared to students with no home internet connectivity. Meanwhile, readiness for online classes is not significantly associated to their academic programs and years in school.

A study of 3,670 medical students from 54 schools was conducted in the Philippines. Research findings revealed that students, regardless of their geographic location and demographics, experienced online learning difficulties in times of the Covid-19 pandemic. Their capability to learn online was influenced by various factors such as their sex, year level, age, academic standing, annual income, internet access used, and how many hours they spent online. The identified barriers in online learning were technological, institutional, domestic, individual, and community (Baticulon et al., 2020).

Another study in the Philippines was conducted by Vitales et al., (2021). Results of their study revealed that among the 2,444 students from different levels, private and government schools with varying ages and sex, they considered themselves as physically prepared, but they were not emotionally, psychologically, and financially ready in their learning through virtual classroom. Their profile characteristics were significantly associated with the level of their preparedness and the challenges they experienced in virtual classroom learning. In addition, the challenges they experienced in virtual learning and their readiness in virtual learning are significantly related.

Students' characteristics of online learning readiness are influenced by students' outcomes, according to the study of Joosten and Cusatis (2020). They argued that readiness in online learning arbitrates the associations between resilience in academics and satisfaction in learning online. This means that as academic resilience becomes higher, online learning readiness of the students also increases. As a result, the online learning satisfaction of the students is also enhanced (Kumalasari & Akmal, 2020). Among Malaysian students, their biggest challenge in online learning is internet connectivity. Most learners taking up Diploma courses experienced difficulties in comprehending the content of their lessons (Chung, Subramaniam, & Dass, 2020).



The influence of e-learning and learning readiness on learning interests through learning motivation as intervening variable for flats scholarship students in Surabaya during the Covid-19 pandemic was established by Sari and Trisnawati (2021). It was further revealed that students' interest to learn is associated with their readiness to learn. In the same manner learning interests of the students are related to their motivation to learn, and student learning motivation is associated with the e-learning interest of the students. Finally learning readiness is related to learning interests through student learning motivation.

In terms of the relationship between students' online learning attitudes and online learning readiness, a moderately significant and positive relationship was established by Hergüner, Son, Son, and Dönmez (2020). Learners' online learning attitude has a positive effect on their readiness for online learning. It implies that to provide the learner with decent online learning, it is a need to form a basis for online learning readiness by creating a positive online learning attitude.

A study reported the experiences of students with anxiety symptoms. It was revealed that approximately 25% of the respondents had increased concerns about academic delays, which is associated with the economic effects of the pandemic, and impacts on daily life (Cao et al., 2020). Furthermore, in the survey of YoungMinds, more than 80% of young respondents decided that their pre-existing mental health conditions were worsened by the pandemic. This is mostly because schools were closed, their routine was altered, and social connections became limited (YoungMinds, 2020).

Previous researches reveal that further investigations are still necessary across populations and among different levels of learners. This is to further understand the disturbance of lives and routines of individuals as a result of the coronavirus disease; as well as its association with their mental health concerns. This present study utilized the framework from the study of Barkham et al., (2019), which synthesized that knowledge acquisition at present is very challenging due to "mental health issues," "psychological distress," and "student wellbeing." The notion of healthy well-being in this present study was embedded in the definition of the World Health Organization (WHO) that health is "a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being and not merely the absence of illness or disability (World Health Organization, 1948).

This institutional study's objective was to gauge the present mental health conditions of the learners and make an assessment of the academic difficulties of the learners in a private university in Cabanatuan City. The significant difference in the mental health conditions and academic difficulties of the students was differentiated according to their sex, age, and department levels. As an academic and institutional study, the cooperation and support of students and teachers, particularly those in the elementary and junior high school levels, were sought. The researchers asked their assistance in explaining to the respondents the objective



of the research and to solicit the consent of their parents. The previous studies and researches conducted around the world mostly dealt with college students or those who are in the field of medicine. This study opted to include the younger population of learners. In exploring the mental health concerns and academic difficulties of the students, the researchers aimed to come up with a proposed program that will benefit the learners and which can be adapted by the university in formulating school policies in times of pandemic.

The objectives of the research are:

1. To describe the mental health concerns of the students amidst their academic difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. To describe the academic difficulties experienced by the students during the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. To establish the significant difference in the mental health concerns of the students during the Covid-19 pandemic across department, sex, and age.
4. To establish the significant difference in the academic difficulties of the students and the teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic across department, sex, and age.
5. To propose a program for the student's mental health and academic difficulties during the pandemic.

Methods

The present research is an academic and institutional study that utilized a descriptive-comparative design. In principle, descriptive researches do not test specific relationships between factors; however, they provide information about behaviors and attributes to reach a better understanding of a given topic. Studying the respondents in their natural environment and therefore being free from the influence of artificial construct is one of the advantages of descriptive research.

The purpose of descriptive-comparative research is to describe and establish the significant differences of variables in the study. In this study, the mental health concerns and academic difficulties of the students were described according to their age, sex, and department level. Comparative studies examined the comparison between two or more variables instead of establishing the relationships between the variables. In this study, the mental health concerns and academic difficulties of male and female students, elementary, junior high school, and senior high school, as well as the students' age, were compared and tested for significant differences.

Total sampling method was used in this research. After the scheduled data-gathering period, from September 16 to September 24, around 70% of the total population responded to this research. Both the students and the parents were cooperative. They understood the objective



of the research. A total of 1,076 out of the 1,547 total population of the students enrolled in the respondent school answered the survey questionnaire which was sent to them online.

The respondents' and their parents' consent were solicited through the assistance of their class advisers. The purpose of the research was explained to them, and they were informed that data gathered were for research purposes only and that their personal opinions were treated with utmost confidentiality.

The number of participants from each department was distributed as follows: in the elementary department, there were 136 respondents out of the 239 total population; from the junior high school department, a total of 457 students participated out of the 517 total population; and from the senior high school department, a total of 483 students participated out of the 791 total population. In terms of sex characteristics distribution, there are 26 male respondents; and 650 female respondents. In terms of age, the mean of the respondents was 14; 5 years old being the youngest and 22 years old as the oldest.

The items of the survey questionnaire were constructed by the researchers based on information gathered among various students who have experienced alternative learning during the pandemic. The survey questionnaire consisted of 14 Likert-type item statements about mental health concerns and 13 Likert-type item statements for the academic difficulties of the learners. The Likert-type item-statements measured the levels of agreement of the respondents that range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4).

The survey questionnaire was researcher-made and was subjected to a reliability and validity process. To test the item reliability of the survey questionnaires, it was subjected to Cronbach's alpha reliability test. The questionnaire was first administered to 20 students with comparable characteristics to the actual respondents. The result of the Cronbach's alpha item-reliability test for the 15-item-statements of the Mental Health Concern scale was .895; while the Cronbach's alpha item-reliability test for the 14-item statements of the Academic Difficulty scale was .904, which means that both questionnaires are excellent in measuring the mental health concerns and academic difficulties of the students (George and Mallery, 2003). The same questionnaire was subjected to content and face validity evaluation through the help of colleagues in the academe who were very much familiar with the concepts of mental health and academic difficulties.

The data gathered from the online survey underwent data processing before it was subjected to data analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The specific statistical tools utilized in this research were weighted mean and verbal interpretation limits, and Analysis of Variance and One-sample T-test for the significant differences. The result of the statistical analysis was presented in a tabular manner, interpreted, and discussed accordingly. The results



were also used to come up with recommendations and formulation of the proposed programs as the output of this research.

Results and Discussion

1. Mental Health Concerns of the Students during Pandemic

Table 1. Mental Health Concerns of Students during Pandemic

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS		WM	VERBAL DESCRIPTION
1.	I worry about the effects of the pandemic, such as the death of many people	3.38	Strongly Agree
2.	I feel agitated because of unstable internet connections during online class	2.95	Agree
3.	I experienced anxiety while learning during the pandemic	2.72	Agree
4.	I am afraid that I am not learning any lessons during alternative learning	2.68	Agree
5.	I feel anxious because using modules in alternative learning never ensures that students are learning	2.61	Agree
6.	I feel anxious because of the strict implementation of checkpoints	2.55	Agree
7.	I do not feel comfortable with alternative learning	2.41	Disagree
8.	I am afraid of the New Normal of teaching	2.37	Disagree
9.	I worry because I don't hear feedback from my teachers regarding my submitted requirements	2.32	Disagree
10.	I feel anxious because teachers seem to be inconsiderate in giving so many requirements	2.31	Disagree
11.	I feel sad because teachers only give a lot of exercises, assignments, and quiz	2.19	Disagree
12.	I feel anxious because my teachers expect us to be online 24/7	2.04	Disagree
13.	I am worried because our school seems not to care about the mental health of students	2.02	Disagree
14.	I feel bad because my teachers are not good at online teaching	1.70	Strongly Disagree
Pooled Weighted Mean		2.45	Disagree
<i>Limits</i>	<i>Verbal Description</i>		
1.0 to 1.74	Strongly Disagree		
1.75 to 2.49	Disagree		
2.50 to 3.24	Agree		
3.25 to 4.0	Strongly Agree		



The mental health concerns of the respondents were described using weighted mean and verbal descriptions of their responses. The topmost response of the respondents was for the item “I worry about the effects of the pandemic, such as the death of many people” with a weighted mean of 3.38 which signifies their strong agreement. Awareness of what is happening in the country and the world particularly the swelling number of deaths does not necessarily provide positive effects on the mental health of the respondents. More often than not, constantly hearing or reading the news from the television or social media about the increase of death tolls due to the COVID-19 contributed negatively to the mental well-being of the learners. In addition, students who suffered from anxiety during virtual learning became common knowledge. Cao et al. (2020) established that on the pandemic’s psychological impact on college students, approximately 25% of respondents experienced anxiety symptoms.

In addition to the findings on the mentioned mental health concerns of the students in this study, they also agreed that they feel agitated because of unstable internet connection, which is necessary for their online class. They experienced anxiety, were afraid that they are not learning any lessons in alternative learning, and feel anxious in using the modules. The strict implementations of checkpoints around them also gave them anxiety. This finding on the problems about internet connectivity is similar to the condition of Malaysian students which uncovered that the biggest challenge in online learning among college students is internet connectivity (Chung et al., 2020).

In contrast to the above mental health concerns of the students, they signified their strong disagreement that their teachers are not good in online teaching, with a weighted mean of 1.70. This means that the teachers in the sample private schools are equipped well in their task of teaching the students using alternative learning strategies. Prior to the implementation of the alternative teaching-learning in the respondent school, various webinars and training were provided to the teachers wherein they were taught to innovate in their online or alternative teaching. In the study made by Dhawan (2020), he asserted that during pandemic the growth of teachers’ knowledge in EdTech is vital; as it was proven in their analysis employing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC). Because most of the teachers in the sample school are graduates of Education degree, they have learned various teaching techniques in their EdTech subject during college. The pooled weighted mean of 2.45 indicates that there are more items in the mental health concern scale that the respondents disagreed with compared to the items where they agreed that they experienced mental health concerns during the pandemic.



2. Academic Difficulties Experienced by the students during Pandemic

Table 2. Academic Difficulties of the Students during Pandemic

ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES	WM	VERBAL DESCRIPTION
1. I encountered difficulties in internet connections at home	3.01	Agree
2. I experienced difficulty in alternative learning because of frequent power interruptions	2.57	Agree
3. I experienced difficulty because my teachers forgot that not all students have the same capabilities and resources	2.50	Agree
4. I experienced that teachers find it difficult to give lectures and discussions in alternative teaching	2.38	Disagree
5. It is difficult to understand whether our school is ready to implement alternative learning	2.36	Disagree
6. I experienced difficulties because the videos presented in an online class are not clear, especially that I am only using a cellphone	2.35	Disagree
7. We have financial difficulties brought about by the alternative learning because of the pandemic	2.30	Disagree
8. It is difficult to do alternative learning because the curriculum is not student-friendly	2.23	Disagree
9. I experienced difficulties in using gadgets in an online class (not familiar with LMS using cellphone/computers)	2.18	Disagree
10. I have difficulties in attending online classes (lack of means/resources)	2.10	Disagree
11. I experienced difficulties due to a lack of computers at home	2.10	Disagree
12. I experienced difficulty because my teachers send activities even if it is not our online class hours	2.10	Disagree
13. We have financial difficulties because of parent's no work no pay situations	2.07	Disagree
Pooled Weighted Mean	2.33	Disagree
Limits	Verbal Description	
1.0 to 1.74	Strongly Disagree	
1.75 to 2.49	Disagree	
2.50 to 3.24	Agree	
3.25 to 4.0	Strongly Agree	

The academic difficulties encountered by the students are as follows: difficulties in internet connections at home, difficulty in alternative learning because of frequent power interruptions, and difficulty because some teachers forget that not all the students have the same capabilities and resources. These findings manifested that the foremost difficulty in alternative learning of the students is internet connectivity at home. In previous related studies conducted specifically in Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Nepal, and the Philippines, they postulated the internet-related concerns of learners. Chung et al. (2020) found out that Malaysian students enrolled in diploma courses' biggest challenge in online learning are internet connectivity, while



preparedness in an online class of students in Nepal was significantly correlated to their internet accessibility (Neupane et al. (2020). The same is true among Filipino students. Included in the problems encountered by students in the study of Baticulon et al. (2020) were the lack of internet access and the number of hours previously spent on online learning. Students from private and public schools in the study of Vitales et al. (2021) asserted that they experienced challenges in virtual classroom learning primarily because of internet connectivity problems.

Another concern of the respondents of this study was having teachers who seem to forget that not all the students have the same capabilities and resources in alternative learning. Such experiences among the students contribute to the academic difficulties of the learners. Wang et al. (2020) said that the shift from traditional face-to-face learning to virtual and flexible learning brought several mental health concerns to the learners, such as anxiety and depressions.

The item with the lowest weighted mean in the academic difficulty scale answered by the respondents was in terms of financial difficulties, with a weighted mean of 2.07. The families of the students were not affected financially because of the pandemic. The pooled weighted mean of the respondents' answers is 2.33, indicating that they disagreed with most of the items of the academic difficulty scale.

3. Significant Difference in the Mental Health Concerns of the Students during the Covid-19 Pandemic across Department Level, Sex, and Age

Table 3. Analysis of Variance for the Significant Difference in the Mental Health Concerns of the Students During Pandemic

		Mean	F-value	Sig.
Sex	Male	2.37	14.756	.000
	Female	2.50		
Age	5 to 11 years old	2.00	62.044	.000
	12 to 15 years old	2.38		
	16 to 22 years old	2.60		
Department Level	Elementary	2.00	83.797	.000
	Junior High School	2.38		
	Senior High School	2.63		

The result of the Analysis of Variance for the differences in the mental health concerns of the students according to their sex, age, and department level established that significant difference existed between the mental health concerns and sex (F-value=14.756); age (F-value=62.044), and department level (F-value=83.787). The significance value for the three variables is .000 which is lower than the significant value of .05.



The computed mean of the response of female students was 2.50, which is higher than the computed mean of the male respondents, which is 2.37. This is an indication that female students experienced mental health concerns while the male students rarely or did not experience mental health concerns during the pandemic. The observation is the same for the age and department level of the students. Students who are 16 to 22 years old or those who are mostly in senior high school obtained a higher computed mean of their response compared to younger students or those who are in elementary and junior high school level. These results clearly show that older students experienced mental health concerns while their younger counterparts did not experience mental health concerns in their alternative learning. This result is supported by the study of Baticulon et al. (2020), who stated that profile of learners such as their age, year level, gender, annual income, academic standing, number of hours previously spent on online learning, and type of internet access affected their insight regarding their capacity to learn online. The same is true in the study of Vitales et al. (2021), which revealed the significant difference between the learners' profile variables and preparedness as well as the challenges they experienced in learning in their virtual classroom.

Furthermore, the significant difference in the mental health concerns of the students is a confirmation of the previous researches of Torales et al. (2020), who expressed the rapid increase of psychological concerns among the population during the pandemic. This is evident in the increase from moderate to severe levels of depressive and anxiety symptoms as mental health issues of many individuals (Wang, et al., 2020). Lee et al.'s (2020) study revealed that graduating students faced increased anxiety, feeling of loneliness, and depression.

4. Significant Difference in the Academic Difficulties of the students and the teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic across department, sex, and age.

Table 4. Analysis of Variance for the Significant Difference in the Academic Difficulties of the Students During Pandemic

		Mean	F-value	Sig.
Sex	Male	2.32	.046	.830
	Female	2.33		
Age	5 to 11 years old	1.94	27.353	.000
	12 to 15 years old	2.32		
	16 to 22 years old	2.34		
Department Level	Elementary	1.94	39.857	.000
	Junior High School	2.33		
	Senior High School	2.44		

The Analysis of Variance result and one-sample t-test for the significant difference in the academic difficulties of the students according to their alternative learning showed that



significant difference was established between the academic difficulties of the students and their age ($F\text{-value}=27.353$) and department level ($F\text{-value}=39.857$). The computed significance value for both age and department level is .000 which is lower than .05.

The computed mean of the responses of students who are 16 to 22 years old and who are in the senior high school department is higher compared to the computed mean of the responses of the 5 to 11 years old and 12 to 15 years old; as well as students in the elementary and junior high school levels. In contrast, no significant difference was established in the academic difficulties of male and female students. Baticulon et al. (2020) expressed the same observation when they found out that among the profile characteristics that affect online learning of the students included age and year level. The same observation is true in the research conducted by Vitales et al. (2021) on academic challenges. This finding on the significant difference in the academic difficulties of the students and their age and department level coincide with the framework utilized in this research, based on the research of Barkham et al. (2019). It proposed that knowledge acquisition among present-day learners underwent several challenges, which included mental health issues, psychological distress, and student well-being.

5. Proposed Program for the students' Mental Health and Academic Difficulties during Pandemic

Identified Mental Health Concerns	Objectives	Specific Activities	Person/s Involved	Expected Outcomes
1. Students are worried about the many death tolls of people as a result of the pandemic	To minimize the anxiety experienced by the students due to the news about the death toll due to the coronavirus disease pandemic	Educate the students that there are always two sides to the story; despite the death tolls, there are also a number of people who recovered and survived the Covid-19 Include in their lessons alternative activities (compilation of positive news about Covid-19 recoveries) that will avert their attention on the negative news about the Covid-19 pandemic Utilize the result of the survey to devise a plan	School/ Department, Parents, Teachers, and Students	Students who are oriented not to focus on the death tolls of the pandemic avoid the anxiety that they experience



	To conduct a random survey regarding the students' frequency of access to news/social media to monitor death tolls of the pandemic	that will reduce their access to news/social media that leads them to news about death tolls		
2. Unstable internet connections during online classes caused anxiety among students	To lessen the anxiety of students caused by unstable internet connection To provide alternative means of learning online and lessen the conduct of synchronous learning that	Self-paced learning may be introduced among the students to lessen the burden of disrupted synchronous learning due to unstable internet connections	School/ Department, Parents, Teachers, and Students	Better internet connectivity for online learners and teachers in the province
3. Online learning anxiety experience of the students during pandemic / Fear that they are not learning the lessons in alternative teaching/ Anxiety caused by the use of modules as an alternative learning strategy	To conduct a timely evaluation on the learning outcomes of the students after engaging them in alternative learning To gauge the cause/reason of the students' anxiety about not learning in alternative teaching and use of modules	The result of the evaluation can be used to design a mental health program that will alleviate the anxiety experienced by the students in alternative learning during the pandemic	School/ Department, Parents, Teachers, Guidance Counselors, and Students	Students with minimal anxiety because of online learning during the pandemic
4. Anxiety caused by the strict implementation of checkpoints	To orient the students regarding the purpose of safety protocols necessary during the pandemic, such as maintaining checkpoints	Conduct webinars for the students to learn the necessity of safety protocols during the pandemic	School Department, Parents, Teachers, Students, Government agencies (DOH, DILG, BFP, etc)	Well-informed students on the importance of observing health protocols; that it should not negatively affect their mental health
Academic Difficulties of the Students	Objectives	Specific Activities	Person/s Involved	Expected Outcomes



<p>1. Difficulty in internet connections at home</p>	<p>To remedy the academic difficulty of the students due to internet connection problems at home</p>	<p>Collaborate with LGUs to find out if there are government programs that aim to improve internet connectivity in the province.</p> <p>The result of this research may be used as support to necessary local ordinances that will allow the installation of cell sites in areas with low internet connectivity</p>	<p>LGUs, school administrators, researchers, teachers, parents, and students</p>	<p>Better internet connectivity for online learners and teachers in the province</p>
<p>2. Difficulty in learning online because of frequent power interruptions</p>	<p>To lessen the difficulty of the students in online learning due to frequent power interruptions</p>	<p>Provide flexible online learning schedules. If there are scheduled power interruptions, allow the students to have asynchronous learning, such as recorded lessons, which they can watch anytime</p>	<p>School Principal, Teachers, Students</p>	<p>Minimized students difficulty due to frequent power interruptions</p>
<p>3. Difficulty with teachers who forget that not all the students have the same capabilities and resources</p>	<p>To re-orient the teachers regarding the diversity of students in terms of capabilities and resources</p> <p>To lessen the academic difficulty of students in terms of having teachers who forget that students vary in terms of capabilities and resources</p>	<p>Teachers should assess the learning capabilities and resources of the students before implementing their alternative teaching programs</p>	<p>School Principal, Teachers, Students</p>	<p>Teachers who are well-oriented regarding learners' diversity</p> <p>Lessen the academic difficulty of students in learning online caused by teachers' inability to foresee learners' diversity</p>



Conclusions

The result of the study leads the investigators to conclude that the student-respondents experienced mental health concerns brought about by the following: the numerous deaths of many people because of the COVID-19 pandemic, unstable internet connection, fear that they are not learning in alternative learning, especially by just answering modules; and strict implementation of checkpoints. Their academic difficulties were mainly due to lack of internet connections at home, frequent power interruptions in their area, and some of their teachers being insensitive to the differences in capabilities and resources of students for online learning.

A significant difference was also established in the mental health concerns of the learners and their sex, age, and department levels. Female students who were 16 to 22 years old and who belonged to the senior high school department experienced mental health concerns during the pandemic. Academic difficulties varied according to age and department levels. Students whose ages were 16 to 22 years and from the senior high school department experienced more academic difficulties compared to the younger level of students.

Conflict of Interest

This research was not funded by any organization. Hence, there is no conflict of interest.

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