The Sentiments of Students and Teachers on Modular Distance Learning Amid the Health Crisis

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Abstrak

Akibat pandemi COVID-19, sekolah-sekolah, khususnya di pedesaan, menerapkan Modular Distance Learning (MDL) untuk memastikan kelangsungan pendidikan. Pembelajaran jarak jauh modular adalah modalitas pembelajaran pendidikan dasar saat ini, di mana orang tua berfungsi sebagai orang tua-guru bagi anak-anak mereka. Studi ini berupaya mengevaluasi pengalaman siswa dan guru Sekolah Dasar, tentang pembelajaran jarak jauh modular selama pandemi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan mewawancarai sembilan siswa dan enam guru untuk mengetahui pengalaman MDL mereka. Proses data melibatkan penggabungan konsep dan tema terkait untuk menghasilkan gambaran data yang lebih terstruktur dan terorganisir. MDL memperkuat ikatan keluarga, mendorong pembelajaran mandiri, dan menghemat uang dan waktu. Namun, ini merupakan beban kerja tambahan bagi orang tua yang bekerja; perlu ada lebih banyak interaksi guru-siswa, mencegah siswa bersosialisasi dan gangguan gadget. Artikel tersebut mengungkapkan bahwa MDL memiliki pengalaman positif dan negatif bagi guru dan siswa. Oleh karena itu, dampaknya dapat bervariasi tergantung pada keadaan individu dan kemampuan beradaptasi. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa strategi yang sesuai harus mengatasi setiap tantangan selama implementasi dan evaluasi. Selanjutnya, guru harus menjalani pelatihan terkait MDL untuk mengatasi masalah yang ada dalam menyampaikan pelajarannya.

Kata kunci: *Elementary school, modular learning, learning experiences, pandemic, remote areas*

Abstract

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools, particularly in rural areas, employed Modular Distance Learning (MDL) to ensure educational continuity. Modular distance learning is the current learning modality of primary education, where parents serve as parent-teachers to their children. This study seeks to evaluate the experiences of students and teachers of Elementary School, on modular distance learning during the pandemic. This study used the qualitative method of interviewing nine students and six teachers to learn about their MDL experiences. Data process involves combining related concepts and themes to produce a more structured and organized picture of the data. MDL strengthens family bonding, promotes independent learning, and economizes money and time. However, it is an additional workload for working parents; there needs to be more teacher-student interaction, preventing pupils from socializing and gadget distractions. The article revealed that MDL has positive and negative experiences for teachers and students. Therefore, the impact may vary depending on individual circumstances and adaptability. The study suggests that suitable strategies should address any challenges during implementation and evaluation. Furthermore, teachers must undergo training related to MDL to address existing problems in delivering their lessons.

Keywords: Elementary school, modular learning, learning experiences, pandemic, remote areas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modular distance learning mixes printed learning materials with remote or online teacher-student interactions. Students receive self-paced modules containing lessons, activities, and tests (Geminiano, 2021; Guzman, 2020). It lets students learn independently and access online resources, including educational instructional materials, discussion forums, and live video conferencing with teachers. Students and teachers can engage and help each other online with this feature (Halili, 2020; Joven et al., 2021). Although adaptable, modular remote learning still requires. For students to receive individualized support and feedback from their teachers, a face-to-face connection can be challenging due to some limitations. The

ability to participate in online program components may not be available to all students (Aprilliyah, 2014; Yunita Anindya et al., 2019). Educators and governments must weigh these pros and cons to guarantee that all students receive a high-quality education. Nonetheless, modular distance learning has become popular during the COVID-19 epidemic since it allows education to continue without spreading the virus (Nieto-Escamez & Roldán-Tapia, 2021; Sevilla et al., 2020).

This method allows students to learn at their own pace and schedule and may help bridge the digital divide by giving printed materials to students without internet access. During emergencies like the covid-19 epidemic, modular remote learning works well. However, this strategy requires proper learning resources, teacher assistance, and student-teacher dialogue (Joven et al., 2021; Kang & Im, 2020). Only through in-person interactions with students can teachers provide them with personalized feedback and assistance. The ability to participate in online program components may not be available to all students due to a lack of resources or internet access (Geminiano, 2021; Maria Josephine Arokia Marie, 2021). Researchers have stressed the significance of carefully weighing the pros and cons of modular remote learning and supporting students and teachers to make it work. They emphasize the need of providing high-quality learning materials to all students, regardless of geography or technology. In response to the covid-19 pandemic, modular remote learning has become popular globally. To ensure this style of learning's efficacy and quality, considerable global gaps must be addressed. The digital divide restricts student access to technology and the internet, especially in underdeveloped nations (Fearnley & Amora, 2020; Jamal, 2020). Modular remote learning may not work for kids with specific needs or who need teacher support to stay motivated. Many teachers need more modular instruction experience and training. Online testing and grading can be difficult to do pretty, and cheating can be more common (Guinto et al., 2020; Singh. & Prasad Singh, 2021). Finally, budgetary and staff ng constraints can inhibit modular learning. Policymakers, educators, students, and families must work together to close these inequalities. Technology, infrastructure, teacher training, and suitable evaluation procedures are possible solutions.

In response to covid-19, Filipino schools have embraced it. It has reduced face-to-face encounters but must be improved to be effective (Alhalafawy & Zaki, 2019; Cleofas, 2021). Distance and connectivity concerns prevent some students from accessing printed or online classes, which is a severe issue. Some children need help learning at home, especially if they lack an excellent area or are easily distracted (Bautista & Masaluñga, 2020; Lase et al., 2021; Slovaček & Čosić, 2020). Students' motivation and engagement can suffer from a lack of teacher-student connection. This modality may not provide tailored instruction and support for children with specific needs, and teachers may have to work harder to prepare and distribute modules.

Modular distance learning makes assessing student learning outcomes difficult, especially for higher-order thinking skills. Finally, schools and families may need help due to the high cost of printing modules and related fees (Bystrova, 2020; Toribio, 2021). The epidemic has made modular distance learning more popular. Due to its independence, this technique presents issues, notably in resolving student learning gaps. Consequently, this study explores the lived experiences of pupils and teachers of modular distance learning during the pandemic in Divisoria Elementary School to establish practical solutions to learning problems and ensure that students obtain a high-quality education even during the epidemic. The aim of this study is to evaluate the experiences of students and teachers of Divisoria Elementary School, Southern Leyte, Philippines on modular distance learning during the pandemic.

2. METHODS

The descriptive method of research was used for this study. The goal of descriptive analysis is to learn more about the situation as it is right now. The descriptive method is the one that should be used in this study because it focuses on the experiences of students and instructors of modular distance learning during the pandemic (Bautista & Masaluñga, 2020). The researcher conducted the study at Divisoria Elementary School. The school has 12 teachers: eleven female educators and one modular instructor, and each student received a weekly module. The research used Purposive sampling which is a sampling technique that qualitative researchers used to identify participants who can offer in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under study. Participants in the study were carefully selected from sixth-grade students. Children at this age are thought to possess the cognitive capacity to learn new information and articulate, thoughtful opinions. The researchers used an interview guide in gathering the data. It comprised three open-ended questions to which Divisoria Elementary School's Grade 6 students and teachers were asked to respond. A list of questions or topics that the interviewer hopes to cover during the interview is referred to as an interview guide. The researchers used the thematic analysis or Collazi's method of analysis (Mason, 2010; Morrow et al., 2015).

To get a general understanding of the entire content, each transcript was read and reread. This process involves combining related concepts and themes to produce a more structured and organized picture of the data. To develop a definite scheme or theme that accurately represents the data, the researcher looks for similarities and differences among the formulated meanings. This step also involves ensuring the classification scheme is externally divergent and convergent, which means it accurately reflects the data and is unique from other structures already used in the field. This procedure aids in developing a more thorough and sophisticated understanding of the phenomenon being researched.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Strengthening Family Bonding

It was found that modular distance learning promotes stronger family ties. The reason for this is that parents are in charge of or involved in helping their children answer the modules. A strong bond between parents and children may have been formed through tutoring. Strong family bonds are created when children and their parent(s) engage in learning activities together. Numerous studies demonstrate that children benefit from parental involvement and learn more. With modular distance learning, they have more time to spend with their parents or help around the house. Because of the modular nature of distance learning, they always have "me, friends, and family time." It is another advantageous outcome of a modular approach to distance education. Covid-19 has forced teachers to implement independent study, which students must do. The parents are in charge during the instructor's absence. A student's overall success depends on having strong relationships with their family.

Teacher F affirms "The positive effects of modular distance learning to the learning performance of the students are, strengthens family bonding." The statement of teacher F is relevant and true when MDL was being distributed due to the hit of the pandemic. Pupil D affirms that "*Sa pagduwa sa gawas makatan- aw pa ug tv sa balay pwede pod namo matabangan ang among mga mama sa paghinlo sa balay, manghugas ug manilhig. Kay makatabang sa paghinlo sa balay ug dako pod ang time nako sa balay kai dili napod ko makalaag sa ahung mga friends, kai mag answer sa module.* (Through Playing outside, we

can watch TV at home and we can help our mothers to clean the house, wash the dishes and sweep the floor. I can help keep the house clean since I spend a lot of time at home because I don't go away with my friends, giving me more time to answer the module.) The pupil also testifies that when using MDL they have even more time to have with their parents doing the household chores. *Maka higayon ug dako nga panahon para sa akong pamilya, kai dili naman ko makahigayon sapag laag.* (It will be an excellent opportunity to spend more time with my family, since I stay at home.) Staying at home means more time of the family that they can have.

Promotes Independent Learning

Children can learn independently and at their own pace. Its foundation is learning in various contexts and settings. Teacher A says, "*Ang mga bata dili na kinahanglan nga mo tungha sa school.* (The children were not required to attend school.) They have to choose their good time in answering their module at any time of the day/night. Their grades are based on the results of the test, unlike regular classes where many competencies are being measured. The children were not required to attend school.). Pupils will complete their modules on their own and come up with strategies for understanding the material, which can help them develop good study habits and a sense of accountability for completing the tasks outlined in the modules.

Pupil G point out "Makasabot ko sa mga module nga gi pang hatag sa mga maestra." (I can fully understand the modules given by the teachers.) This statement was supported by pupils E and F, they say "*Makahibaw ko sa mga lessons kai mo basa man ko sa module. Maka antigo ko kay tungod daghang mga basahon.*" (I was able to understand the lesson by reading. Because there is so much to read, I can learn." Modules, worksheets, or textbooks are given to the students to support their independent learning. This method is based on the constructivism theory, in which students actively construct their knowledge from personal experiences. This type of learning may provide opportunities for students to develop skills in self-directed learning, time management, and self-discipline. These skills may be valuable not only for academic success but also for personal and professional growth. The finding suggests that educators and policymakers should consider incorporating modular distance learning as a component of education to help promote independent learning skills among students.

Economize money and time

Saving time and money is a clear component of MDL. It is done to save money, particularly on transportation. In addition to saving money on transportation costs to and from school, online learning eliminates the need for in-person instruction. Teacher E says, "*Parents economize on children's weekly monetary allowances. Online classes helped save time and energy on travel to and from school. It increased discipline and activity of students, the inevitability of mastering new technologies, increased independence and general outlook of students, the ability to independently study their lessons.*" MDL aids them in reducing costs associated with fair and other fees and other expenses. Parents, especially those with low incomes, can save money. Parents hold their payments, and costs do not include allowances. This type of learning may be more cost-effective and efficient than traditional in-person learning. Students may save time and money on transportation, accommodation, and other related expenses to attend school in person. This finding suggests that educators and policymakers should consider incorporating modular distance learning as a component of education to help reduce financial burdens on students and their families, especially when traditional in-person learning is not feasible or accessible. It also highlights the need to further explore the potential cost savings associated with distance learning.

Limit Teacher-Learner Interaction

It is true and has been demonstrated that students lose interest in learning and will only explore their potential for learning if there is teacher-student interaction. The interaction between the teacher and the students is restricted, primarily because the students cannot ask their teachers questions in person because of the teachers' inadequate or absent explanations. Because students' grades have improved and the majority of parents are the ones who answer their modules, some students only rely on the critical answers provided. Some students need the gadget necessary to participate in online classes, which makes it difficult for them to contact their teachers through calls or chats. This results in better or more teacher-student interaction. Teacher D affirmed that "*not all students do their modules wholeheartedly. Others tend to copy to the answer key of their modules*". They find it hard because no teacher is present to discuss the lessons with them. Pupil C also stated and seconded, "*Walang natutuhan kaming mga bata sa modular learning dahil   sa ang mga ina at ama namin ang sumasagot*" (*We didn't learn from the modular learning because our mother and father answered the questions. We play computer games and other things prohibited for the children.*)

The majority of students rely on the answer key. Particularly when they struggled to comprehend the lesson and complete the activities fully, it was determined that students had the slightest knowledge or had yet to understand the study during the modular learning process fully. Although they have received high grades during their modular learning, they are aware that when they meet in person, the situation they have been dealing with will cause their rates to drop. It highlights the need for educators to find ways to facilitate effective communication and engagement between teachers and students in the online learning environment. Effective communication and engagement are critical for promoting student learning and supporting students who may struggle with the independent nature of distance learning. This finding suggests that educators and policymakers should consider strategies to promote teacher-learner interaction, such as providing opportunities for synchronous communication, regular feedback, and other online resources that may support students' learning. It also highlights the need for ongoing professional development and support for teachers to help them adapt to the changing demands of distance learning and to ensure that they can provide adequate support for their students.

Additional Works to Working Parents

Feelings of parents toward remote learning are mixed. While some parents view this as an additional burden, others strongly connect it to their child's academic performance. Parents with children in school during the pandemic find it extremely difficult, mainly if they are employed. They are burdened and encounter challenges due to constantly monitoring their kids. Due to their employment, many parents cannot devote their entire time to helping their children with their schoolwork. This is especially true in these trying economic times when pandemics are rampant. Every working parent has a problem because, by the time they get home, they have a lot of tasks to complete, including their children's schoolwork.

Pupil D stated that "*Maglibug ko ug usahay sa mga module nga gihatag sa maestra kay walay mo tabang nahu ug answer kay wala pod mu-explain kay nagtrabaho.*" (*Sometimes, I was confused about the module that was given by a teacher because no one will help me in answering because of work.*) Teacher D affirmed that "*some parents spoil their children and do the deeds instead of their children.*" The parents have additional work specially to working parents. Pupil C stated that "*Walang natutuhan kaming mga bata sa modular learning dahil sa ang mga ina at ama namin ang sumasagot ng mga tanong.*" (*We didn'tlearn from the modular learning because our mother and father answered the questions. We play computer games and other things prohibited for the children.*) Pupil D

stated *"Maglibug ko usahay sa mga module nga gi hatag sa maestra kai way mo tabang nahu ug answer kai way mo explain kay nagtrabaho." (Sometimes, I was confused about the module that was given by a teacher because no one will help me in answering because of work.),* seconded the statement, parents also are busy with their works and no one has been there to explain or to teach them with their modules. Some parents struggle to comprehend and respond to their modules because they have limited capacity for comprehension or knowledge, and some of them are already worn out from work when they get home. More work has been added to parents' workloads. During modular learning, parents serve as instructors. Some parents do not even consider their children's academic performance because they find it a hassle.

It highlights the need for policymakers and educators to consider the impact of distance learning on families and households. Working parents who are required to support their children's learning at home may face significant challenges in managing their work responsibilities while supporting their children's education. This finding suggests that policymakers and educators should consider ways to support working parents, such as providing flexible work arrangements or childcare support, to help them manage the additional responsibilities of distance learning. It also underscores the importance of clear communication and coordination between schools and families to ensure parents are informed about their children's learning expectations and have the resources and support they need to help their children succeed in the online learning environment.

Gadgets Distractions

Teachers and students alike know how distracting gadgets can be when they are available at home. Parents mistakenly believe that their children are researching the topics covered in their lessons when, in fact, all they do on their devices is watch videos or play online games. They occasionally even protect ones that are prohibited. They can spend more time playing online games and watching videos than researching, studying, or concentrating on their modules.

Pupil J states that, *"Kaming mga bata ay naglalaro ng mga computer games at iba pang mga hindi pwedeng panoorin. Daghan ko ug time magdula ug dili ko ka focus ug maajo sa akong mga answeranan". (We, the learners, are only fond of playing computer games and other games and even the prohibited ones. More time is spent playing and I was not ableto give enough time and focus on my modules.)* Teacher D affirmed that "*the students spent more time in playing, more time on playtime and watching Television".* And most of all, learners nowadays are extensively exposed to social media. *"Daghang koy time mag dula ug dili ko ka focus ug maajo sa ahung mga answeranan." (I have lots of time in playing and I cannot focus on the things that need to be answered.)*- Pupil E stated that there are destruction and less on focusing in their study.

Prevents Pupils from Socialization

The pandemic had a significant negative impact on the social development of many students. Schools and development play an important role in fostering and enhancing social skills. This opportunity has been taken away from learners by modular distance learning. As pupil B states that *"Laay, wakoi na antigohan, dili ko kaajo kasabot wakoy gawas-gawas sa balay" (It is boring, I didn't learn and I always stay at home).*

Social interaction is prohibited because of the pandemic because the virus will spread. The most effective way to continue learning is through homeschooling. Although socialization is essential to growing up, the pandemic abruptly stopped it. When other learners surround a learner, education is more enjoyable and realistic. They find it boring and

interact with the students very little. Although they have group activities, they must complete them alone because they cannot interact socially to prevent the virus's spread.

Distribution of Modules

Teachers in Divisoria Elementary School produced a printed module. They are free to distribute modules however they see t. The modules will be handed out on Monday; parents are welcome to pick them up from the school and are the only ones who can place them in the drop box. Due to the pandemic, we are currently dealing with; students are not permitted to complete their assignments in school. Health protocols are also implemented when the modules are distributed and retrieved. Teacher E states *that "During the lockdown, the Divisoria Elementary School teachers reproduce printed modules. We taped the BLGU in delivering the modules to our students. Parents serve as the learning facilitators that will assist their children in accomplishing different tasks. The teachers monitored the students through text, calls, and messenger." Teacher D also states "We implemented it quickly, the parents get the module every Friday, and the same they pass the previous module."*

Discussion

Modular distance learning teaches the pupils to be independent enough when learning. It allows them to show off their understanding independently. They showed that they were capable of learning. Family engagement is critical for ensuring that the needs of their students are met through distance learning. As a consequence of covid-19, students must engage in independent study (Geminiano, 2021; Rotas & Cahapay, 2020; Vistan, 2021). In the MDL, the responsibilities fall to the parents. Developing excellent relationships with one's family is essential to a student's overall success. Based on the finding, this type of learning may have positive impacts beyond academics. The increased flexibility of modular distance learning allowed for more time and opportunities for families to interact and bond (Bautista & Masaluñga, 2020; Salazar, 2020; Sanchez et al., 2021). This finding may be helpful for educators and policymakers to consider when designing and implementing distance learning programs, as it may benefit students' academic and social-emotional development. The study's results on the experiences of pupils and teachers with modular distance learning during the pandemic may have several implications for addressing gadget distractions. Firstly, the study may highlight the importance of addressing gadget distractions during modular distance learning, such as providing guidelines for minimizing or avoiding distractions while using technology and increasing their innovativeness in learning (Carrillo, 2020; Valenzona et al., 2022).

The findings may lead to improved training and support for teachers and pupils to help them manage gadget distractions more effectively, such as through educational technology that promotes concentration and focus. The experiences of teachers and pupils with gadget distractions may also prompt adjustments to learning strategies, such as incorporating more interactive and engaging learning activities to keep pupils more focused and less prone to gadget distractions (Fathoni et al., 2021; Irawaty et al., 2021). Finally, the study may also promote the responsible use of technology by encouraging pupils and teachers to take regular breaks, limit screen time, and practice healthy habits to minimize gadget distractions and improve overall well-being. Overall, the study's findings provide valuable insights into the challenges of gadget distractions during modular distance learning and offer important recommendations for improving the learning experience of pupils and teachers during the pandemic and beyond (Bagde et al., 2021; Salis Hijriyani & Astuti, 2020). The study's results on the experiences of pupils and teachers with modular distance learning during the pandemic may have several implications for addressing gadget distractions. The study may highlight the importance of addressing gadget distractions during modular distance

learning, such as providing guidelines for minimizing or avoiding distractions while using technology. Training and support for teachers and pupils to help them manage gadget distractions more effectively, such as through educational technology that promotes concentration and focus. Thirdly, the experiences of teachers and pupils with gadget distractions may also prompt adjustments to learning strategies, such as incorporating more interactive and engaging learning activities to keep pupils more focused and less prone to gadget distractions. Finally, the study may also promote the responsible use of technology by encouraging pupils and teachers to take regular breaks, limit screen time, and practice healthy habits to minimize gadget distractions and improve overall well-being. Overall, the study's findings provide valuable insights into the challenges of gadget distractions during modular distance learning and offer important recommendations for improving the learning experience of pupils and teachers during the pandemic and beyond (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; L. F. Casinillo, 2022).

The potential negative impact of distance learning on children's social development. Socialization is a critical aspect of children's growth and development, and the lack of opportunities for social interaction with peers and teachers may have a detrimental effect on their social skills, emotional well-being, and mental health (E. L. Casinillo et al., 2022; L. F. Casinillo et al., 2022). This finding suggests that policymakers and educators should consider ways to address this issue, such as incorporating more opportunities for socialization and collaboration in the online learning environment or providing safe and structured in-person interactions outside the classroom. It also underscores the importance of monitoring and supporting children's social and emotional well-being in the online learning environment and providing resources and support for parents and caregivers to help them address any concerns or challenges related to socialization.

These are the means of distributing the modules that they implement every week. Previous study state that students and teachers must interact with the lessons, a modular approach will teach the pupils to learn at their own pace and strengthen their independent learning skills (Taufan, 2022). The study's results on the experiences of pupils and teachers with modular distance learning during the pandemic may have several implications for education authorities. Firstly, the study may highlight areas where the current distribution strategy may be lacking and prompt education authorities to improve their approach to ensure that all pupils have access to the necessary modules. Secondly, the findings may change how the curriculum is delivered to pupils, such as modifying the content of the modules or adjusting the pace of learning to suit the needs of pupils and teachers better. Thirdly, the experiences of teachers and pupils with modular distance learning may also highlight the need for enhanced training and support, such as additional resources, tools, or technology to facilitate distance learning better (Bautista & Masaluñga, 2020; Geminiano, 2021). The results suggest future planning for distance learning during times of crisis, helping education authorities to develop more effective and efficient strategies for providing education to pupils even during periods of disruption.

4. CONCLUSION

The study found that modular distance learning has positive and negative experiences for teachers and students. Therefore, the impact may vary depending on individual circumstances and adaptability. Strategies should address any challenges during implementation and evaluation. In that case, administrators and educators need to act quickly, perhaps by setting up symposiums or seminars for parents on how to handle and discipline their kids so that they can manage their time when completing assignments and using technology. Before the start of each school year, conferences or open forums should be held

between teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to better explain or discuss the reality of the new normal in education, particularly concerning the answer key provided along with the modules. As for future studies, one may consider the subjective perception of students and teachers of modular learning and construct a statistical model that predicts the causal factors affecting it.

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