



Proficiency Level and Challenges of Students in Disciplines and Ideas in the Social Sciences

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ABSTRAK

Ilmu-ilmu sosial sangat penting bagi siswa untuk berfungsi dalam masyarakat. Oleh karena itu, penilaian kemahiran diperlukan untuk memeriksa perolehan kompetensi mereka. Tujuan penelitian ini yaitu menilai tingkat kemahiran dan tantangan siswa dalam Disiplin dan Ide Ilmu Sosial (DISS) di sekolah menengah atas swasta. Selain itu, penelitian ini menyelidiki perbedaan tingkat kemahiran mereka dibandingkan dengan jenis kelamin dan nilai. Jenis penelitian ini yaitu penelitian kuantitatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kuantitatif, khususnya pendekatan deskriptif-komparatif. Responden penelitian ini berjumlah 144 siswa yang ditentukan dengan menggunakan stratified random sampling. Teknik analisis data menggunakan menggunakan statistik inferensial. Hasil penelitian ini yaitu siswa menunjukkan tingkat kemahiran yang berkembang dalam DISS, yang menunjukkan bahwa kompetensi tersebut belum dikuasai sepenuhnya. Sebagai perbandingan, terdapat perbedaan ketika dikelompokkan berdasarkan jenis kelamin dan tingkatan, dimana perempuan dan mereka yang memiliki nilai 90-100 mendapat nilai lebih tinggi dibandingkan rekan-rekan mereka. Sementara itu, tantangan yang dihadapi siswa dalam mempelajari DISS berkaitan dengan guru, siswa, lingkungan pelajar, sumber daya, fasilitas, dan faktor mata pelajaran. Mengingat hasilnya, teori berubah divalidasi. Oleh karena itu, perbaikan berkelanjutan didorong untuk menerapkan konten, strategi, dan penilaian dalam DISS untuk mengembangkan tingkat kemahiran siswa dalam kursus tersebut.

ABSTRACT

The social sciences are essential for students to function in society. Therefore, a proficiency assessment is necessary to check their acquisition of competency. This research aims to assess the level of student proficiency and challenges in Social Science Disciplines and Ideas (DISS) in private high schools. Additionally, this study investigated differences in their proficiency levels compared to gender and grades. This type of research is quantitative research. This research uses a quantitative research design, specifically a descriptive-comparative approach. The respondents for this research were 144 students who were determined using stratified random sampling. Data analysis techniques use inferential statistics. The results of this research are that students show a developing level of proficiency in DISS, which indicates that these competencies have not been fully mastered. In comparison, there were differences when grouped by gender and level, with women and those scoring 90-100 scoring higher than their peers. Meanwhile, the challenges faced by students in studying DISS are related to teachers, students, student environment, resources, facilities and subject factors. Considering the results, the anchored theory was validated. Therefore, continuous improvement is encouraged to implement content, strategies, and assessments in DISS to develop students' level of proficiency in the course.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social sciences are vital as these influence the students' social knowledge (Machila et al., 2018; Muthuprasad et al., 2021). These equip them to make reasoned decisions as citizens of a culturally diverse and democratic society (Indriyani et al., 2021; Sutadji et al., 2021). This discipline plays a significant role in fostering their knowledge, skills, and behavior necessary to become members of society who understand their rights and civic duties (Mafrudin, 2023). Furthermore, this cultivates essential skills, including creative thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and research, empowering individuals to enhance their lives and contribute to social transformation (Mafrudin, 2023; Mutiani & Faisal, 2019). That is why, modern educational standards require students to be proficient in understanding the importance of citizenship, history, and the world rather than simply memorizing concepts (Nordgren, 2017). Thus, social sciences are integrated into the curriculum to improve the students' adaptability towards

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modernization and globalization. Meanwhile, the Philippine educational system recognizes the significance of social science education in transforming students from mere observers to productive and informed citizens of society (Cena & Bual, 2021; Crisolo et al., 2021). Additionally, these sciences aim to produce critical thinkers, socially responsible and globally aware citizens (Montelibano et al., 2023; A. R. D. Santos, 2016). With this, the Disciplines and Ideas in the Social Sciences (DISS) is offered as a course for Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students in response to these visions (Education, 2019). This subject provides the students with an in-depth understanding of theories and concepts, which enable them to examine and propose potential solutions to local and global conditions (Afrina et al., 2021). By including DISS in the curriculum, these students are equipped with a comprehensive grasp of the multifaceted world (Grant et al., 2022). This also introduces them to fundamental concepts and methods of inquiry as they relate to the Philippine context and current trends (Estrera, 2020). However, the students often face challenges in DISS learning due to the teacher, students, learning environment, facilities, and the subject itself. In the Philippines, there is a shortage of specialized teachers in social sciences who have the knowledge, competencies, and skills to teach diverse students (Garcia & Bual, 2022). Meanwhile, social sciences include a wide range of content from the disciplines of history, geography, political science, economics, and sociology that have demanding standards delivered with limited time allocation making it difficult for students to meet academic expectations (Bhatnagar, 2018). Moreover, issues such as poor connectivity, congested classrooms, and numerous writing tasks exacerbate students' lack of enthusiasm (Lazaga & Madrigal, 2021). Lastly, the pandemic forced them to shift to remote education compromising traditional teaching strategies, assessments, and content delivery posed a significant challenge to their learning experiences in the Philippines (Bual & Madrigal, 2021; Cena & Bual, 2021; Pahilanga et al., 2023).

In private senior high schools, the students have difficulty understanding the complex and intricate contents of the DISS since there is an absence of actual instructional interactions (Junsay Jr & Madrigal, 2021). Concretely, due to the course's philosophical nature, social science teachers opted for the lecture and discussion method as their primary teaching approach (Ramos, 2015). Furthermore, unreliable assessment techniques impacted the accuracy of evaluating students' understanding (Letina, 2015). Meanwhile, students' poor foundational knowledge hindered them from grasping more advanced social science concepts (Alinsunurin, 2021). Additionally, HUMSS students suffer from poor connectivity, insufficient learning resources, and uncomfortable learning environments at home and school (Alic & Bual, 2021). Several studies were conducted on social sciences in the Philippines, particularly on students' academic performance in blended learning environments (Junsay Jr & Madrigal, 2021; Santiago, 2022), perceptions and motivations in the students' learning (Beboso & Bual, 2022), challenges and opportunities in teaching (Lazaga & Madrigal, 2021), thinking skills and learning interests in world history as a social science subject (Montelibano et al., 2023) and the teachers' conceptions in teaching social studies (Estrera, 2020). Meanwhile, some studies assessed the students' proficiency levels in economics (Quirao et al., 2023), contemporary issues (Rios et al., 2023), and biology (Manzanares & Linaugo, 2022). However, given the available studies, there is limited literature on students' proficiency level in DISS, especially among private senior high schools. This is the gap that this study would like to fill in. Thus, this study assessed the proficiency level in the Disciplines and Ideas in the Social Sciences (DISS) of students in selected private senior high schools in Kabankalan City, Philippines, during 2022-2023 in terms of introduction to social science, dominant approaches and ideas in social science, indigenizing social science, and social sciences in the real world relative to sex and DISS grades. It also investigated the differences in their proficiency level when grouped according to the demographics. Likewise, it identified their challenges in learning DISS. The findings may serve as a basis for formulating a Strategic Intervention Material (SIM) to improve DISS instruction.

The study theorized that the student's proficiency in DISS varies according to their sex and grades, and this is anchored on Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget, 1936). This theory underscores that individuals progress through distinct developmental stages, and their cognitive skills are progressively enhanced within each stage. This enabled the students to develop the capacity for more advanced social thinking, grasp intricate social science concepts, and apply social science principles to real-life situations. However, due to individual differences in cognitive development, some are expected to be more cognitively developed than their counterparts. In this study, this theory has something to say with the student's proficiency in DISS, where their cognitive development differs according to their individual differences in terms of sex and grade. This research aims to assess the level of student proficiency and challenges in Social Science Disciplines and Ideas (DISS) in private high schools.

2. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design, particularly the descriptive-comparative approach. The descriptive approach determined the students' proficiency level in DISS in selected private senior high schools in Kabankalan City, Philippines. Additionally, this approach identified the learning challenges encountered by students. The comparative approach was employed in investigating the difference in the students' proficiency level when grouped to demographics. Meanwhile, the respondents were 144 Grade 12 students, which were determined using stratified random sampling. In assessing the study, it utilized a 50-item researcher-made multiple choice test questionnaire. It was subjected to validity using Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio and yielded a valid score of 0.92. It was pilot-tested, and obtained a KR-20 reliable result of 0.94. Test item analysis was done to identify the item's difficulty, how the item discriminates between students, and investigate the response frequency. Results obtained 88.4% of retained questions and 11.6% of rejected questions. It was responded using beginning, developing, approaching proficiency, proficient, and advanced. In challenges, it used a researcher-made checklist relative to teacher, student, learner environment, facilities and resources, and subject factors.

In data analysis, mean, standard deviation, frequency count, percentage, and rank were used to assess their proficiency, and identify challenges. Meanwhile, using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov, the normality test results showed that the proficiency [KS=0.139, p=0.000] was not normally distributed. Hence, the use of non-parametric statistical tools. With this, Mann Whitney U-Test and Kruskal Wallis were employed in analyzing the difference in proficiency level when grouped into demographics. Lastly, this paper adhered to the ethical guidelines of the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB). It addressed the general principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Specifically, it ensured the participants' vulnerability, anonymity, and confidentiality of the data gathered.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

First, Student Proficiency Level in DISS. Generally, their proficiency level (M=17.12, SD=5.41) is developing. Introduction to social sciences (M=4.68, SD=1.84) is the only area rated with approaching proficiency, while the remaining areas, namely dominant approaches and ideas in social science (M=7.22, SD=2.89), indigenizing the social science (M=1.93, SD=1.32) and social sciences in the real world (M=3.30, SD=1.69) were developing proficiency. Regarding sex, male (M=16.12, SD=5.82) and female (M=17.69, SD=5.11) students acquired developing proficiency. Relative to grade, students with 90-100 (M=18.56, SD=5.84), 85-89 (M=16.02, SD=4.9), and 80-84 (M=14.95, SD=3.72) rated developing proficiency. Student Proficiency Levels in DISS are presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Proficiency Level of Students in DISS

Variable	Introduction to Social Sciences			Dominant Approaches and Ideas in Social Science			Indigenizing the Social Sciences			Social Sciences in the Real World			Proficiency		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Sex															
Male	4.17	2.00	AP	6.83	3.03	De	2.08	1.38	De	3.04	1.68	De	16.12	5.82	De
Female	4.96	1.69	AP	7.44	2.80	De	1.85	1.28	De	3.44	1.69	De	17.69	5.11	De
Grade															
90-100	4.90	1.97	AP	8.00	3.12	De	2.12	1.34	De	3.53	1.63	De	18.56	5.84	De
85-89	4.76	1.57	AP	6.61	2.44	De	1.61	1.22	De	3.04	1.65	De	16.02	4.90	De
80-84	3.77	1.74	De	6.23	2.25	De	2.05	1.40	De	2.91	1.77	De	14.95	3.72	De
Whole	4.68	1.84	AP	7.22	2.89	De	1.93	1.32	De	3.30	1.69	De	17.12	5.41	De

Note: Be (Beginning), De (Developing), AP (Approaching Proficiency), Pr (Proficient)

Second, Challenges of Students in DISS. The students' challenges were categorized into teacher, student, learner environment, resources and facilities, and subject factors. Regarding the teacher factor, the students are challenged by the teachers who are teaching outside their specialization (f=44, 30.3%). In student factors, they have poor time management in accomplishing tasks (f=74, 51.0%). Meanwhile, in learner environments, resources, and facilities, they perceived their home as an unfavorable place to study

(f=49, 33.8%). Lastly, in subject, they perceived limited time allocated per topic (f=51, 35.2%). Student Challenges at DISS are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Challenges of Students in DISS

Areas	f	%	Rank
Teachers			
Teaches the lesson that is out of their expertise	44	30.3	1
Depends on textbooks	41	28.3	2
Inability to explain complex concepts	38	26.2	3
Utilizes traditional strategies	37	25.5	4
Pressures the students to accomplish tasks	34	23.4	5
Lacks student support and encouragement	33	22.8	6
Misses to give feedback	28	19.3	7
Lacks the confidence to teach	20	13.8	8
Lacks mastery of the subject	18	12.4	9
Students			
Poor time management in accomplishing tasks	74	51.0	1
Difficulty in understanding the lessons	72	49.7	2
Lack motivation	62	42.8	3
Poor interest in the subject	53	36.6	4
Poor background in social sciences	51	35.2	5
Learner Environment, Resources, and Facilities			
Home is unfavorable to study	49	33.8	1
Lacks encouragement for library use	44	30.3	2
Lacks administrative support for the activities	41	28.3	3.5
Inadequate facilities like technology for instruction	41	28.3	3.5
Outdated textbooks and references	28	19.3	5
The classroom is uncondusive for learning	23	15.9	6
Subject			
Insufficient time	51	35.2	1
Topics demand many activities	46	31.7	2
Competencies are too high to achieve	45	31.0	3
Objectives are difficult to understand	39	26.9	4
Subject demands unachievable performance tasks	36	24.8	5
Some topics are irrelevant	29	20.0	6

Third, Difference in the Students' Proficiency Level on DISS in terms of Sex and Grades. The results revealed significant differences in their proficiency level when grouped to sex [$U=1768.000$, $p=0.007$] and grades [$\chi^2(3)=7.903$, $p=0.048$]. Post hoc analyses revealed that female students and those with grades 90-100 rated significantly higher than their counterparts. Hence, the null hypotheses are rejected. Differences in Student Proficiency Levels in DISS when grouped by gender and class are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Differences in the Students' Proficiency Level IN DISS When Grouped to Sex and Grade

Variables	U	z	p
Sex	1768.000*	-2.687	0.007
	χ^2	df	p
Grade	7.395*	2	0.048

Discussion

Proficiency in DISS entails students' understanding of fundamental ideas, facts, concepts, generalizations, principles, theories, and methodologies within the various social science disciplines (Education, 2019). The overall students' developing proficiency indicated that they have acquired the minimum knowledge, skills, and understanding of DISS (Education, 2019). This could be attributed to the course's inherent complexity. Not to mention that this subject encompasses various disciplines and ideas in social sciences, which require critical and analytical skills (Joshi, 2019). Most students concerning higher-order concepts are challenged to understand their applications in real-world contexts (Bhatnagar,

2018). Furthermore, it was revealed in the student's challenges that the teachers' inadequate knowledge and limited expertise adversely affected their ability to grasp the profoundness of the content as supported by (Petalla & Madrigal, 2017). The teacher's deficiency in mastery and proficiency hindered students from conveying complex concepts (Karkouti et al., 2022; Mellom et al., 2018; Sobradil et al., 2020).

Moreover, the pandemic caused the transition to remote learning, increased stress levels, and limited social interactions which further aggravated the students' developing proficiency (Kasman & Hamdani, 2021; Tria, 2020; Zierer, 2021). The lack of actual interaction, limited access to instructional resources, and technological barriers disrupted the traditional learning environment (Lazaga & Madrigal, 2021; Sutarni et al., 2021). Meanwhile, DISS is offered in Grade 11, but the assessment was conducted on Grade 12 students, expecting that they had acquired the competencies. Hence, the time element may have influenced the results since most respondents had already forgotten the concepts. The time gaps between the course delivery and the assessment can have a detrimental effect on results, potentially leading to decreased proficiency levels due to knowledge decay and the need for ongoing reinforcement to maintain competency (Frost & Connolly, 2016). Hence, further studies are necessary to validate these claims. The approaching proficiency in the introduction to social sciences was relatively higher than other areas. The results revealed that students acquired fundamental knowledge, skills, and core understanding with little guidance from teachers and peers. This could be attributed to the introductory nature of this area focused on basic concepts and principles of social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities. The contents' simplicity allowed the students to acquire a foundational understanding and explore the historical underpinnings of social science disciplines (Education, 2019). However, despite this progress, there is room for improvement.

The area of introduction to social sciences focuses on the origins of social science and its disciplines. It also includes the similarities and uniqueness of the disciplines under social science (Joshi, 2019; Mohajan, 2018). Here, teachers need to integrate concept maps as a teaching tool to emphasize essential concepts and the historical development of social science and its disciplines. Concept maps are valuable in visually representing and simplifying complex ideas of social sciences development and its disciplines (Soylu & Memişoğlu, 2019). Moreover, teachers assumed prior knowledge among students resulting in the limited time allotted to the topic (Chiteng Kot, 2018). Additionally, the result resonated with (Cundiff et al., 2020), which emphasized integrating real-world examples to underscore the uniqueness and application of various disciplines. Nevertheless, the result implied that teachers might consider incorporating well-designed concept maps into their strategies to enhance students' comprehension, facilitate a clearer understanding of the subject, and improve proficiency in this area.

The students' developing proficiency in dominant approaches and ideas in the social sciences can be attributed to its philosophical nature. It shows that students have developed minimum knowledge, skills, and understanding because of the complex theories and their applications in real-world contexts. Exploring fundamental theories, like structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism, enabled students to analyze social phenomena and comprehend their underlying dynamics (Education, 2019). However, these theories often involve complex concepts requiring the students' critical skills to comprehend and apply these intricacies (Mafrudin, 2023; Nind et al., 2019). Consequently, the students' engagement heavily depends on understanding social sciences' foundational concepts (Børhaug & Borgund, 2018). Students faced difficulties exploring and applying theoretical concepts to sociocultural, economic, and political conditions when their foundational understanding is inadequate (Swanson & Collins, 2019). Furthermore, students struggled to connect the abstract concepts of social science theories to concrete situations due to insufficient activities that emphasized practical applications (Cundiff et al., 2020; Trusz, 2020). Additionally, inappropriate strategies and assessments hindered students from delving deeper into the topic and applying these to real-world scenarios (Mabborang et al., 2023; J. M. Santos & Castro, 2021). The absence of actual social interaction and feedback from teachers impeded the reinforcement and retention of these complex concepts (Levitt et al., 2023). However, in online or modular environments, students often lack these crucial opportunities for reinforcing and internalizing theories (Beboso & Bual, 2022). Hence, the findings emphasized the teachers' vital role in simplifying the content and employing strategies and assessments to foster understanding, engagement, and motivation. Correspondingly, the developing proficiency in indigenizing the social sciences indicates that students were challenged to examine Filipino thinkers' key concepts and ideas. The students' developing proficiency was likely rooted in the course's complex nature, which involved the integration of indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and experiences (Education, 2019). Understanding and applying the concepts of Filipino thinkers require a deep appreciation of the cultural and indigenous frameworks (Guidangen, 2021; Oropilla & Guadana, 2021). Also, limited exposure to diverse case studies, research materials, and resources that emphasize the contributions of Filipino

thinkers hindered students' comprehension and engagement (Guidangen, 2021). Furthermore, the emphasis of DISS teachers on international trends and influences of popular culture has overshadowed the exploration and appreciation of students' cultural heritage (Guidangen, 2021; Singh, 2022). Social science educational curricula and teaching materials have not adequately provided comprehensive coverage of the local culture (Crocco & Marino, 2017). Hence, the results implied that teachers must utilize an interactive strategy that promotes the appreciation of Filipino culture and social thinkers. Additionally, teachers need to contextualize the contents to align with the cultural context of the local community.

Social science in the real world also rated a developing proficiency. The result indicated that students gained minimum knowledge and skills in comprehending and applying concepts to practical contexts (Education, 2019). Students were challenged to effectively bridge the gap between the theories learned and practice. This required a deep understanding of how these concepts can address social, political, and economic issues. Students were limited to theoretical learning without practical experiences (Bhatnagar, 2018; Nind et al., 2019). Students' prior knowledge, experiences, and observations enabled them to critically analyze the connection between theory and practice (Nind et al., 2019). Social sciences often require practical application and real-world exposure to grasp the concepts thoroughly (Cundiff et al., 2020). Additionally, DISS teachers employed a traditional approach in education that prioritizes rote memorization as a means of assessment, leading students to focus on memorizing theories without understanding the underlying concepts (Shakeela, 2020). Moreover, the limited time available for instruction has made students feel rushed and unable to analyze topics in-depth (Bhatnagar, 2018). Consequently, students have resorted to memorization as a coping mechanism to cover a broader range of content within the allotted time (Nind et al., 2019; Shakeela, 2020). The sudden transition to hybrid learning models, limited access to resources, and reduced social interactions have challenged students' experiences (Margarito et al., 2022). The result suggested that the students' theoretical understanding should be strengthened by engaging them with interactive strategies, providing appropriate assessments to deepen their knowledge, and bridging the gaps between theory and applications.

Regarding sex, the result could be attributed to the philosophical aspects of DISS, like exploring social theories, analyzing human behavior, and examining societal structures that aligned more with female students' inclinations as supported by (Spahr, 2015). Additionally, with the outnumbering females in this study, this record could highly influence their rating. Female students have better social skills and greater academic achievement than male students in social sciences (Gustavsen, 2017; Trusz, 2020). Females displayed strong study habits, better organization, time management, and discipline (Trusz, 2020). Their passion for exploring societal issues, cultural dynamics, and human behavior drives their engagement in learning (Roberts et al., 2019). Meanwhile, male students prefer demonstrative activities compared to females, as supported by (Akay et al., 2022). The results underscored the subject's significance for both male and female students, highlighting its potential benefits for diverse students. Regarding DISS grades, the result could be attributed to the students' studying strategies and retention of information. Amidst the online and modular setup, those with 90-100 retained some of the concepts they have learned in DISS, reflecting their ability to apply their knowledge, though not entirely due to the time element. In support, the students' developing proficiency was negatively impacted by the shifting instructional modality, disrupted routines, reduced social interaction, and limited access to practical learning experiences (Margarito et al., 2022). Meanwhile, techniques such as regular review, concept mapping, and practice quizzes reinforce their understanding of key concepts (Khaleel, 2017). These are consistent with (Demir, 2022), which similarly demonstrated that students' academic success in social sciences is closely reflected by the grades they attain. Hence, it is necessary to emphasize the significance of improving the quality of DISS instruction, whether it is delivered through a modular or online setup. Regarding teacher factors, the result revealed that DISS teachers have limited knowledge and expertise in the subject matter, which impacted their ability to deliver the content and engage students in meaningful discussions. When teachers lack mastery, it results in the students' deprivation of the opportunity to delve in-depth into the subject (Desmita et al., 2021; Mabborang et al., 2023). The importance of enhancing social science teachers' pedagogical and professional skills to foster a conducive learning environment, leading to increased motivation and improved academic outcomes (Desmita et al., 2021). Hence, this implies the need for teachers to engage in professional development opportunities to establish their pedagogical content knowledge, skills, and teaching strategies in DISS. Regarding student factors, the results revealed that most encounter challenges with poor time management stemming from external distractions such as personal responsibilities. These factors impacted their ability to manage their time, which impedes their academic performance. Highlighting that the students' external distractions and competing commitments like obligations at home contributed to their poor time management in accomplishing tasks (Bhatnagar, 2018; Tria, 2020). The students' failure to balance their responsibilities leads to procrastination and difficulty in allocating sufficient time for studying and completing tasks

(Tezer, 2020). Furthermore, when they fail to see the lessons' practicality, they rely on memorization and passive learning (Bhatnagar, 2018). Hence, these imply the essentials of establishing the students' time management skills to help them in their academic responsibilities.

In learner environment, resources, and facilities, many students perceived their home as an unfavorable environment for studying. The result revealed that home environments filled with distractions posed significant challenges to students. In support, These distractions can disrupt the students' concentration and hinder their ability to focus (Blasiman et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2011). Additionally, most homes are not suitable for learning due to inadequate resources. Most students at home have inadequate access to essential learning resources and facilities, such as reliable connectivity, and textbooks (Tria, 2020). Hence, the findings imply the importance of establishing a conducive learning environment, especially at home, where students can accomplish their assignments and tasks. Regarding subject factors, most students believed there is limited time allocation per topic. When the allotted time is insufficient, students feel rushed, and unable to thoroughly analyze the topic. It restricted their ability to explore concepts, engage in critical analysis, and make meaningful connections between different ideas within the course. Limited time for the teaching-learning process hinders the students' opportunities for in-depth discussions and hands-on activities (Chiteng Kot, 2018). Hence, the findings imply the reexamination of the allocated time per topic to sufficiently implement the DISS content. This study perceived that the student's proficiency in DISS varies according to sex and grades. Given the differences in their proficiency, this study validated Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget, 1936). This principle underscores that individuals progress through distinct developmental stages, and their cognitive skills are progressively enhanced within each stage and vary according to individual differences. The findings support the notion that their proficiency in DISS and cognitive development differs according to their individual differences in terms of sex and grade. However, with the issues of time element, instructional modality, content, and assessment, further studies are encouraged to validate the claims of this paper.

4. CONCLUSION

The students' overall developing proficiency implies the importance of improving the DISS instructional delivery among private senior high schools to achieve the advanced competency as prescribed by the Department of Education. To achieve this, teachers play a vital role in simplifying the content, employing effective instructional strategies, and appropriate assessments that elicit students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward the course. The findings also signify the essentials of addressing identified challenges to establish a quality teaching-learning process. Hence, improving instruction and addressing these challenges ensure the students' competency acquisition and engagement, even in varied educational and social conditions. However, given the validation of theory and the assessments' limitations, further post-pandemic studies on the student's proficiency in DISS are encouraged to validate the claims.

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