The Challenges of Online Learning for Polytechnic University of the Philippine Students in Tertiary Level During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Today we face a bizarre new normal because of a health crisis caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. It is comprehensible that most of us have adjusted to this new lifestyle where everything we do is limited inside our homes. Along with that, student's face new challenges that would become critical in their education. This study attempts to investigate certain reasons and barriers that contributes to the effectiveness of online learning despite facing different challenges such as being in a pandemic (COVID-19). To achieve this aim, we will thoroughly analyze the gathered data from UNESCO and PUP (from 2020 to 2021) itself regarding with educational concerns experienced amidst the pandemic. Most of the data came from surveys done using online forms and the like. The research will also mainly focus on the said school and nothing more. This is to help improve things we need to improve and see what works best for our students and professional academes.

**CCS CONCEPTS** • Online Learning Challenges -> E-learning; Emergency Remote Teaching; Digital Migration Methods; Struggles of Students in Online Classes, COVID-19, Pandemic

**Additional Keywords and Phrases:** Private Education Institutions, Learning Continuity Plan, New Normal, University Students, Education, Technology, Digital Divide, Stress, Mental Health

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1. Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) wreaked havoc on the world economy, psychology, and social elements, as well as the educational system. The virus, which first surfaced in December 2019, swiftly expanded to become a pandemic, prompting school closures and a move to remote learning by all levels of educational institutions in the new normal of education. As a result, traditional educational delivery strategies have changed, and learning environments have been restructured.

To meet the challenge of developing innovative educational delivery mechanisms in higher education, colleges and universities around the world have experimented with distance education, online teaching, remote learning, blended learning, and mobile learning. It was suggested that the university build proper online platforms or a learning management system beforehand [1]. In a short amount of time, millions of professors began to lecture in front of a computer screen, and their students were forced to stay at home and complete their courses over the internet [2]. As a result, E-learning and online higher education instructions play a critical role in ensuring that learning and teaching do not cease throughout the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Diseases (COVID-19) Epidemic [3].

In this circumstance, internet learning exposes Filipino students' shortcomings. The present state of education and learning is likely to intensify existing inequities while also posing new issues. Some people may find it difficult to purchase a learning gadget that allows them to effortlessly tune in to online classes and turn in assignments through the internet system. Despite efforts to make education more accessible to all, Filipino university students face several challenges when it comes to distance learning.

Several studies have been undertaken to reflect on the stress [4], [5] and difficulties faced by students in virtual learning environments within their various countries (e.g. [6] in the Philippines; [7] in India; [2] in China; and [8] in Zimbabwe). This study contained significant takeaways, lessons learned, and recommendations for managing education in this tough period. It aims to provide data on the challenges experienced by Filipino university students in the setting of a developing country to aid authorities in building better educational solutions. If this question is answered, new insights and maybe relevant actions can be gained. As a result, the purpose of this research was to focus on the Challenges of Online Learning for University Students in the Philippines During the Covid-19 Pandemic.

1. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Despite the government's efforts to acknowledge positive COVID-19 cases, the "state of emergency" and associated anti-coronavirus regulations enacted on March 16, 2020, are yet another tool to silence individuals who speak out. Those in positions of authority cannot suppress the truth that everyone is involved. Inequality, isolation, discrimination, and global unemployment may be intensified in the medium and long term if the COVID-19 epidemic is not adequately handled through policies. The quality of education is one of the many issues that must be addressed. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the way people learn, particularly in higher education. As a result of this, face-to-face teaching and learning sessions have been transformed into virtual meetings through a variety of online learning technologies [10].

Every government is putting policies and procedures in place to oversee education. One is to sustain and offer excellent education despite lockdown and community quarantine, the new normal should be included in the creation and execution of the "new normal educational policy" [19]. There has been a recent surge in research into education's new normal. According to a study conducted at Peking University in China, colleges close their doors and implement online learning. Others focused on national policies, professional development, and curriculum in other parts of the world, while others focused on students’ individual learning experiences throughout the pandemic [2], [15]. Furthermore, COVID-19's exceptional growth has disrupted education and led to the advent of e-learning. As a result of the move from traditional instruction to online learning, different perspectives develop, needing attention and research [22]. But not only that, but a slew of new obstacles had surfaced as well. According to the findings from research conducted in Zimbabwe, ODL students face several issues. Among the loads they encounter include financial constraints, a lack of resources such as library books and computers, and the need to balance their numerous responsibilities with their education [8]. In the Philippines, the term "open and distance learning" (ODL) was coined at the University of the Philippines – Open University (UPOU), a single-modal DE institution in the Philippines, to refer to the new mode of online or Web-based DE [6]. Moreover, this change, which we might refer to as a digital transition, is not a literary phenomenon; it has been accompanying higher education institutions for quite some time now. Because the ability to apply ICT in many aspects of life is evolving at a rapid pace, universities must be up to the responsibility of preparing future professionals to meet difficulties and deliver solutions [9]. But, above all, resistance to change will not benefit any educational institution anywhere in the world. They'll be assessed on how quickly they adjust to changes in such a short time and how well they sustain quality. Educational institutions' reputations are on the line, and they are being scrutinized. Their ability to adapt is demonstrated by how effectively they behave and preserve the quality of their education in the face of the crisis. The only option is to switch from face-to-face lectures to online ones. Academic institutions, indeed, would not be able to convert all their college curricula into an online resource in a mere day [7].

Digital technology in education is a hotly disputed topic in Germany. For decades, passionate debates have centered on the utility of computers in education [13]. According to a study conducted in India, even though more students are becoming familiar with internet-based learning, many students are still reluctant to participate in online programs. The study's findings suggest that the acceptance of online programs among undergraduate students may be limited [12]. The use of the internet and gadgets, which are restricted to some students, could be one of the causes behind this. Because smartphones and computers, as well as an internet connection, are technological needs for online education, it was suggested that the institution build formal online platforms or learning management systems first [1]. Students in the Philippines, according to several research, faced several interconnected challenges as they struggled to adapt to online learning. Experiencing trouble modifying learning methods, having to undertake obligations at home, and poor communication between educators and learners were the most common issues. Furthermore, findings from an online poll conducted in December 2020 show that 98 percent of respondents were gadget ready for online education in the first semester of SY 2020-2021, with Online Education Only being the principal type implemented (OEO). Most respondents (94%) agreed that the sudden shift to online education had impacted education quality, and 64 percent believed it was not as successful as traditional face-to-face classroom engagement [16], [20]. While there are numerous advantages to blended learning, governments must first determine the restrictions and problems that students face to ensure that their online learning experience is not affected. Understanding these stumbling barriers might help academic institutions design guidelines that will help students progress and improve their online learning experience [21].

Previous research has found that virus outbreaks have an impact on people's mental health and well-being. Several risk variables were taken into consideration. Women and those between the ages of 16 and 24 were shown to be at a high risk of acquiring psychological discomfort. Similarly, during the H1N1 pandemic, recent research found a beneficial response to feeling worried, unhappy, or emotionally disturbed. A population-based survey conducted during the SARS outbreak revealed post-crisis mental anguish. Medical students in Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, were extremely stressed during the MERS outbreak [4]. Widespread breakouts have been linked to negative mental health repercussions [14]. These catastrophes can result in increased anxiety and unavailability, particularly among students who participate in a variety of activities such as recreation and education. To combat the development of COVID-19, educational institutions changed from face-to-face activities to predominantly online learning modes, worsening these impacts. While all students may be affected, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to experience emotional discomfort as a result of their restricted financial ability to purchase essential gadgets and internet access. As a result of these factors, inequity resulting from socioeconomic differences may cause depression among students during the pandemic [18]. Even though students' fear of getting COVID-19 has increased, there is adequate evidence that students will employ anxiety management techniques during this global health security danger [5]. And because students have no option but to accept government policies, some would suffer the repercussions, while others will adjust to the new normal that the world has become.

According to a Chinese analysis study, recommendations for upgrading the online education platform have been made to raise the level of online education during the COVID-19 epidemic and promote information-based education reform [11]. Its objective is to guarantee that the government and educational institutions provide students with a high-quality education. Because the new normal of learning prevents instructors from monitoring what students are doing, it may lead to increased academic dishonesty, as well as being impersonal and lacking in emotion when compared to face-to-face classes [17]. Furthermore, the majority of professors had just basic computer skills and had no experience with online education, with only a few having a very solid internet connection. But despite these issues, they must still be well-trained and technically careful to apply and integrate technical tools to accomplish the success of online learning and teaching, as they play such a critical part in its success or failure [3].

1. methodology

This study attempts to analyze the existing problems and challenges being faced by the education system during the COVID-19 Pandemic. It would explore and further investigate about the struggles being presented by the academes with online education and determine the possible issues or gaps behind the phenomena being experienced. This study will use the gathered data from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines Online Class Readiness Evaluation from April, May, June and July of 2020. The data given to us by the university are the results of what they have gathered using an online survey and it provides vital information for us to properly categorize, observe and analyze.

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1. \* Place the footnote text for the author (if applicable) here. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)