

Students' Perspectives on Flexible Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case Study

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Abstract

Flexible learning has its advantages, one of them is the evolution of technology and the presence of the internet. Today, the Internet and compressed video have taken distance learning in new directions, allowing distance learning to occur in real-time. Live video instruction is the most popular and fastest-growing delivery mode in the United States (Ostendorf, 1997). It is also a way for students to keep the flow of education progression at bay so that they would not be left behind by the school year. During the pandemic, students are also provided with learning materials like modules, workbook, worksheet and textbook that aid in their independent learning process. Students in this learning modality have one common communication channel: either through email or the learning management system (LMS). This mode is specifically helpful for students with difficulty attending specific time schedules. It also allows peer collaboration through group assignments where students can work and review tasks together. Ultimately, this aids to those with no full access to the internet (Gardiner, 2020). The study is aimed towards the insights and experiences of senior high school students on how the Covid-19 pandemic affected their studies on the new modes of learning their school has provided.

The study is exclusive only from within 10 to 15 senior high school students within Leyte to improve the effectiveness of the results that would satisfy the needs of the researchers. The researchers will have Senior High School students studying in Leyte as participants of the study. The participants describe their experiences on new modes of learning as being effective, safe, but a little bit difficult. In terms of perspectives, the participants stated that they have potential problems, adjusting to adapt and having a positive outlook.

Most of the participants responded as they have potential problems and are the main reason why students struggle to learn in this pandemic. According to M. Adnan & K. Anwar(2020),stated that students reported a few other issues like lack of interaction with the instructor, response time, and absence of traditional classroom socialization. In comparison to the researcher's study, this is connected because both our studies shared the same responses between student's regarding difficulties with time and miscommunication. And last but not the least, the researchers also identified the challenges that the participants encountered which are Internet, Personal Struggles, Environment, Miscommunication, Not Affected and Lack of time. Among the six challenges encountered, the internet is the most stated complaint by the participants of the researchers study.

Keywords: Online Class; Senior High School

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Flexible learning has its advantages, one of them is the evolution of technology and the presence of the internet. Today, the Internet and compressed video have taken distance learning in new directions, allowing distance learning to occur in real-time. Live video instruction is the most popular and fastest-growing delivery mode in the United States (Ostendorf, 1997). It is also a way for students to keep the flow of education progression at bay so that they would not be left behind by the school year. During the pandemic, students are also provided with learning materials like modules, workbook, worksheet and textbook that aid in their independent learning process. Students in this learning modality have one common communication channel: either through email or the learning management system (LMS). This mode is specifically helpful for students with difficulty attending specific time schedules. It also allows peer collaboration through group assignments where students can work and review tasks together. Ultimately, this aids to those with no full access to the internet (Gardiner, 2020).

However, there are instances that break that flow of progression out such as household chores and motivation. Poor to no internet access, financial constraints, lack of technological devices, and affective or emotional support. Interestingly, findings showed that learning remotely in these trying times is challenging because aside from the existing problems on access and affordability, the concerns on financial stability and affective support contributed to interrupted learning engagement. (Alvarez Jr., A.V, 2020)

Online learning is a method of education that is used to teach students virtually. According to an article by Sunil Kumar (2015), learning online is hard for some students because of some factors such as adaptability struggles, technical issues, computer literacy, time management, and self-motivation.

The lack of face-to-face interaction with the instructor, response time and absence of traditional classroom socialization were among some other issues highlighted by higher education students. (Anwar, Kainat, 2020). And because of the situation right now, Coronavirus pandemic has not only impacted human life but also impacted medical education and residency training all over. With principles of social distancing, all face to face classes were suspended due to the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic (Agarwal & Kaushik, 2020).

There are two types of students, those who do it for the grades and those who want to learn. And because of the current situation, students are losing motivation for learning. According to an article by Sean Turner (2020), some students lack motivation because of the environment they are learning in. The lack of a proper learning environment causes distractions for the student. Therefore, the absence of a classroom affects the all in all learning experience of a student. The article also stated that the workload has increased. "But quite possibly the largest reason students have struggled to stay on top of their school work during this change, is just how big of a shift the quarantine has been from their daily lives, and how it has affected them mentally." is what the article said. Although they say that we should adjust to the new normal, it is not easy for a lot of students to just simply adjust to the new learning strategies, especially with all these distractions.

The researchers have taken interest in setting the objectives of this study to explore the perspectives of Senior High School Students within Leyte towards the new normal and modes of flexible learning such as live, online synchronous classes and asynchronous classes such as modular learning with the use of Self-Learning Modules (SLM) provided by the school.

Research Questions

1. How do the students describe their experiences after a few months of adapting to a new mode of learning?
2. What are the students' perspectives on the new modes of learning during the new normal?
3. What are the challenges they encountered and how did it affect their studies?

Scope and Delimitation

The study is aimed towards the insights and experiences of senior high school students on how the Covid-19 pandemic affected their studies on the new modes of learning their school has provided. The study is exclusive only from within 10 to 15 senior high school students within Leyte to improve the effectiveness of the results that would satisfy the needs of the researchers.

Theoretical Framework

This study is supported by the theory of Garrison back in 1990. It states that the development of new technologies has promoted an astounding growth in distance education, both in the number of students enrolling and in the number of universities adding education at a distance to their curriculum. During this time of the pandemic, students are encouraged to adapt to a flexible learning to progress their academic development despite the new normal.

Definition of Terms

Learning. The process of acquiring new understanding, knowledge, behaviors, skills, values, attitudes, and preferences.

Pandemic. a global epidemic -- an epidemic that spreads to more than one continent.

Flexible Learning. It is a method of learning where students are given freedom in how, what, when and where they learn.

Online Learning. Where education takes place within the internet.

Modular Learning. A form of flexible learning that uses Self-Learning Modules (SLM)

Self-Learning Modules. These are designed where the learner is free to choose what to learn, how to learn, when to learn and where to learn.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Online learning is different from emergency remote teaching, online learning will be more sustainable while instructional activities will become more hybrid provided the challenges experienced during this pandemic are well explored and transformed to opportunities. (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020)

In many ways, learning and teaching in an online environment are much like teaching and learning in any other formal educational context: learners' needs are assessed, content is negotiated or prescribed, learning activities are orchestrated, and learning is assessed. (Terry Anderson, 2008)

Allo, (2020) stated that the learners' perception on online learning reveals that it is good in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic. They perceived online learning as being very helpful in the middle of a pandemic. This study not only reported that online learning is good in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic but also spotted the light on the availability of internet access, financial issues, and online learning implementation. (Allo, 2020)

A study shows that there is a growing interest in hybrid, blended, and flipped instruction as a way to incorporate the best of different delivery methods. This study investigates and identifies student preferences for both face-to-face and online learning, an open response instrument was used to allow broad insights into students' responses without biasing or limiting the feedback. (Crews & Butterfield, 2014)

The studies taken together suggest that students take online courses for a number of personal reasons. Some students have to balance work and family, to manage time, and to make a personal commitment. (Blackmon and Major, 2012)

One of the most important things is to examine the relations between several personal factors and students' choice of instructional format and completed a survey that assessed their motivational beliefs (task value and self-efficacy), achievement-related emotions (enjoyment, boredom, and frustration), and satisfaction with the course. (Artino, 2010)

According to Beck & LaFrance, (2017) online learning is growing too fast for existing regulatory structures to oversee and generally has failed to live up to its potential. It's said that operators have generally not produced successful schools and that there are requests of reforming the cyber schooling funding mechanisms, data systems, and oversight.

Online learning cannot produce desired results, where a vast majority of students are unable to access the internet due to technical as well as monetary issues. The lack of face-to-face interaction with the instructor, response time and absence of traditional classroom socialization were among some other issues highlighted by higher education students. (Adnan and Muhammad, 2020)

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

Participants of the Study

The researchers will have Senior High School students studying in Leyte as participants of the study. According to Charman and Mason in 2010, the number of participants is not an issue as long as saturation is achieved. Hence, at least 10 but no more than 15 students will be chosen as the participants of the study.

The researchers will be making use of purposive sampling, a sampling technique in which the researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before collecting the data for the study, the researchers will be asking consent from the participants to answer by contacting them. Then, they will be handed out with questionnaires through google forms and be interviewed online as this will reduce physical contact making it easier for the researchers and the participants to conduct the study.

Data Analysis Technique

The researchers will be conducting a narrative type of data analysis to interpret and analyse content from the experiences and responses from the participants through questionnaires. It focuses on using the stories and experiences shared by people to answer the research questions.

**CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

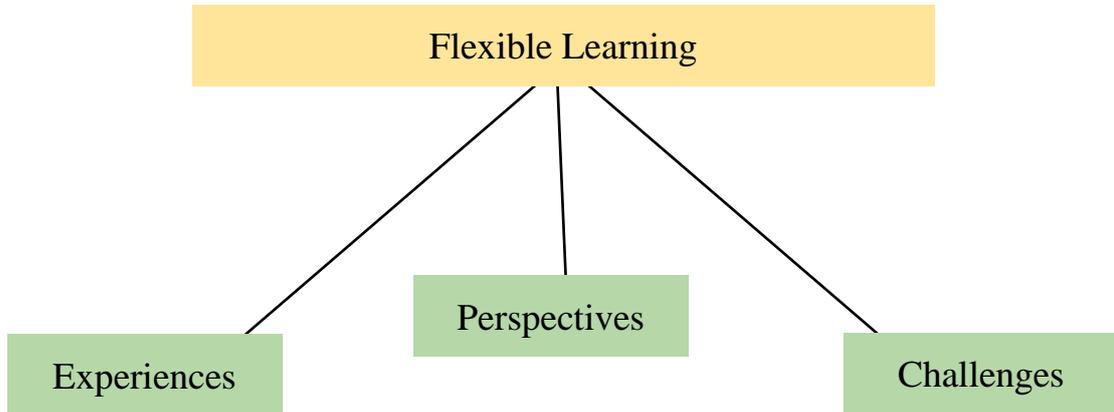


Figure 1. This figure shows the different aspects the participants have taken part in answering the questionnaire.

The figure above represents the aspects the participants have considered while recalling and sharing their lived experiences and insights about the new modes of learning provided by their schools. The main themes are the participants' Experiences, Perspectives, and Challenges while adapting to the changes of the new normal and the modes of learning during the pandemic.

A. Experiences

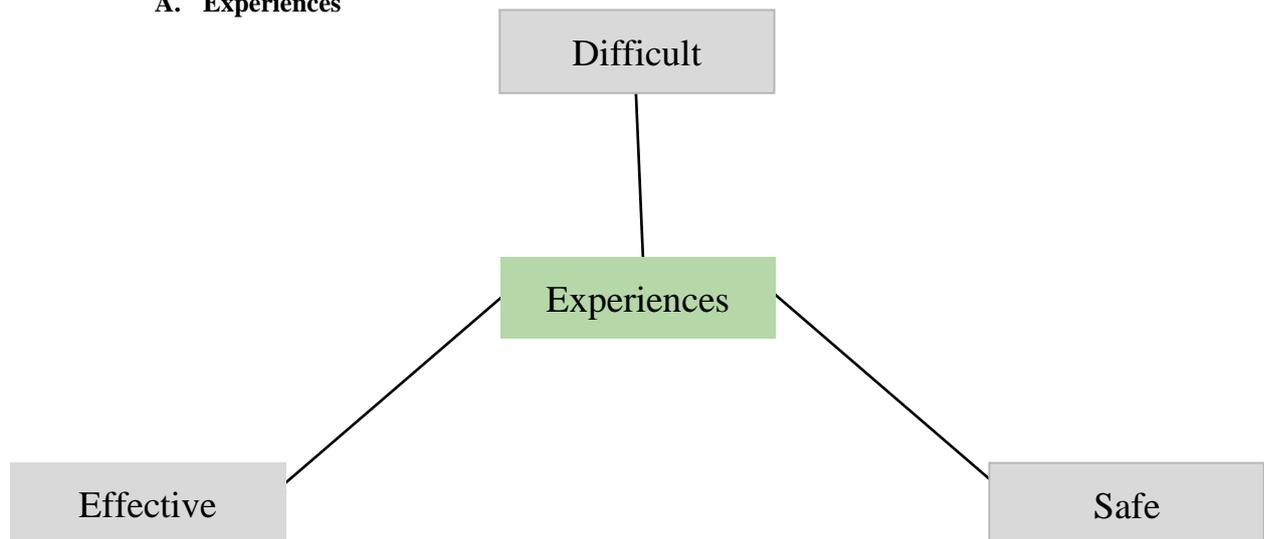


Figure 2. This figure shows the factors the participants have experienced during the new modes of learning.

Experience is the first theme that will be discussed. It involves having three subthemes: Effective, Safe, and Difficult. This theme carries the lived experiences of learning exposure from the participants during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. Effective

This subtheme refers to the positive learning experiences of the participant during the pandemic. Some participants did not experience a major difference or struggle while attending to what needs to be done.

“Even though we have changed a new learning modality, we are still provided the same quality education like what we have had during face to face classes.”

- Participant G

“Ah, I am contented with my school’s learning method because I can still learn a lot of things although not the same pace of learning back in face-to-face classes.”

- Participant C

“Our school’s learning method was actually good since they give you time and other teachers are considerate since they know that other teachers give many schoolwork.”

- Participant K

2. Safe

This subtheme refers to the positive experiences of the participant and their safety during the pandemic. Safety is the state of being "safe", the condition of being protected from harm or other danger and in this case, the pandemic.

“Ah, I like the new mode of learning because it does not endanger my health as a student by going to school during this pandemic .”

- Participant C

“Introducing new modes of learning amidst the global crisis is the best way teachers and students can give and receive education without compromising everyone’s health.”

- Participant D

3. Difficult

This sub theme refers to the struggles of learning or complying of tasks by the participants during the pandemic. Some factors may include the need to adapt

“Difficult... Kinda hard.”

- Participant A

“The new modes of learning have been a bit hard due to the fact that we aren't learning in a physical classroom. My school's current learning method has pros and cons but they are still able to provide the necessary knowledge I need as a grade 11 student”

- Participant F

“I like it but it’s hard. It’s new and it’s hard for me to learn cause I’m used in learning face-to-face and there are also many distractions so it’s hard to focus.”

- Participant I

“The new modes of learning for me, it’s very hard because of the situation we have right now”

- Participant J

“It is very stressful to deal with, especially with how the teachers are also coping with the new mode and how it gives them a hard time to help students and making both of them unable to show their best ability in what they do.”

- Participant H

B. Perspectives

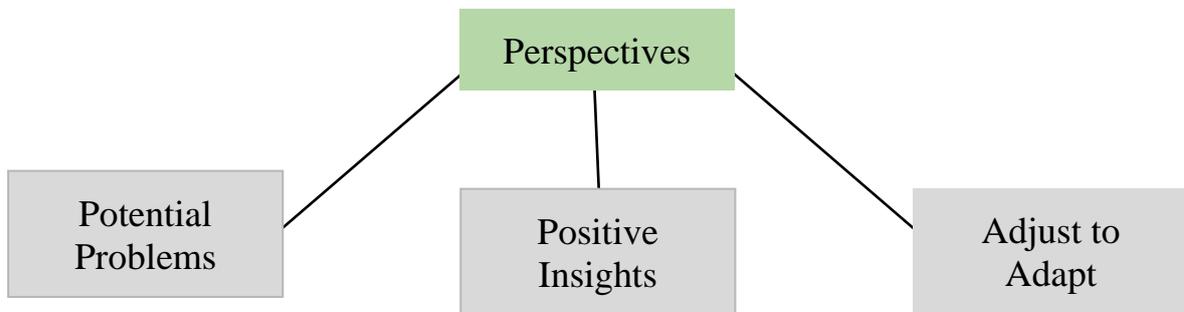


Figure 3. This figure shows the categories of insights from the participants on the new modes of learning.

The second theme, Perspectives, talks about the insights and personal viewpoints of the participants. It involves three subthemes: Potential Problems, Adjusting to Adapt, and the Positive thoughts about the new modes of flexible learning

1. Potential Problems

This subtheme talks about the potential problems the participants and maybe other students might experience while adapting to the new normal and flexible learning.

“Students cannot have substantial knowledge because of many problems.”

- Participant B

“The downside of this new kind of learning if the student does not have the means to attend online lectures will be having a hard time to continue his/her studies.”

- Participant C

“A lack of enthusiasm and poor time management are two primary causes of failing classes, and the ability to focus declines as a result.”

- Participant E

“Most students aren't fortunate enough to study well, such as access to proper equipment or gadgets.”

- Participant F

“There are students who are slow learners and need the guidance of teachers in several academic matters that they don't understand.”

- Participant K

2. Adjust to Adapt

This subtheme refers to the insights of the participants on what they must do during these times of flexible learning.

“Students must accept the new learning environment with an open mind and heart. Understanding the benefits of eLearning or even sharing them with others may help to shift this mentality and improve the quality of teaching for distance classes.”

- Participant E

“Though i am still adjusting to this new type of learning method, i am getting used to it.”

- Participant G

“My thoughts on it is that it is the best the school can do because it is the first time something like this became widespread to adapt to something as devastating as the pandemic.”

- Participant H

3. Positive

This subtheme refers to the positive insights of the participants and holds the implementation of flexible learning with good regard.

“It is implemented effectively by the government to help curb the pandemic. My thoughts for our school's learning method is it is extremely helpful so that students can still learn despite this ongoing pandemic.”

- Participant B

“It's good I guess.”

- Participant J

“is very convenient for the students. Such ways gave the learners a chance to learn, considering their current conditions at home.”

- Participant D

C. Challenges

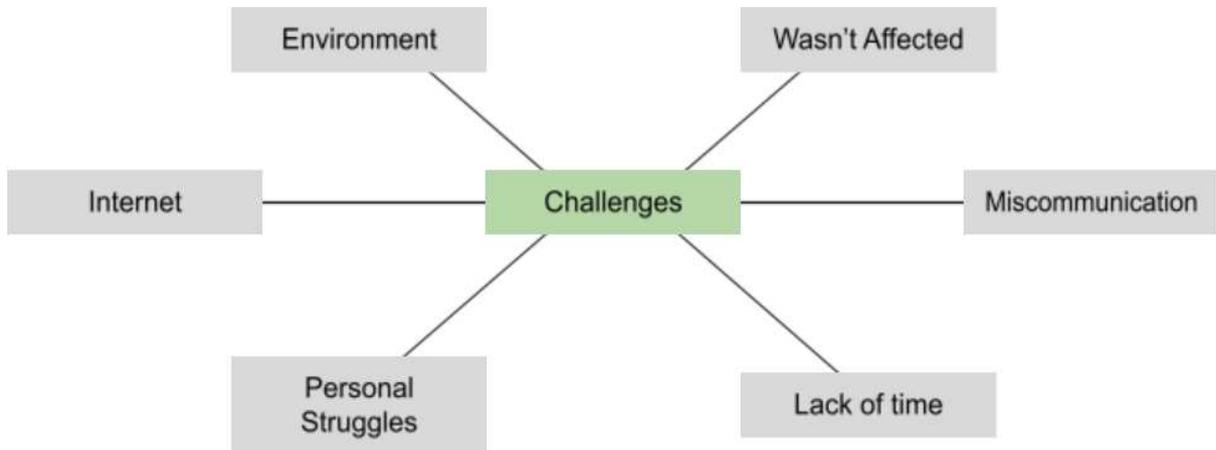


Figure 3. This figure describes the factors that pose a challenge to the participants on the new modes of learning.

The final subtheme, Challenges, has five subthemes: Internet, Personal Problems, Environment, Miscommunication, and Was not Affected. This theme covers the challenges and factors that posed as a struggle to the participants on their learning experiences during the pandemic.

1. Internet

This subtheme refers to the problems of connectivity of the participants to the school through the internet. The internet plays a big role in the new flexible learning approach during the pandemic.

“Internet was one of the problems that I encounter that greatly affected my studies.” - Participant A

“...and sometimes unstable internet connectivity.” - Participant B

“Main factors are primarily related to lack of time and sluggish internet.” - Participant E

“One of the biggest challenges I have encountered is bad Internet connection which is one of the main things required for the new learning mode, It affects me in a way that my online lectures tend to buffer and other instances where the internet acts up and I have problems with sites that take too long to load” - Participant F

“The challenges I have encountered was unstable internet, because of this, I was not able to attend some of my classes.” - Participant G

“The challenges we've encountered were internet instability “ - Participant H

"I encountered many stuff some like bad connections."

- Participant I

"...and the slow internet connection... and slow internet connection disrupts the learning of the student in online classes"

- Participant K

2. Personal Struggles

This subtheme describes the factors that made the participants feel down in doing subsequent tasks that has emotionally affected them.

"I encounter many challenges such as lack of motivation and interest."

- Participant B

"This made me lose motivation and will to answer the given activities, which resulted to failure of submitting them."

- Participant D

"Other explanations can include learning too little during lectures and improper study habits."

- Participant E

"and more and also many distractions."

- Participant I

3. Environment

This subtheme refers to the factors around the participant and how it effects them in their learning patterns in the new flexible learning during the pandemic.

"The challenges were the environment. It did affect my studies since if your/our environment is uncomfortable we cannot do the task properly"

- Participant K

4. Miscommunication

This subtheme refers to the barriers and misinterpretation of messages between the students and teachers. This could result in a misunderstanding between both parties.

"Miscommunication. It has affected my studies through it having to interfere being able to easily understand what the instructions and the intentions of the teacher are causing it to be more difficult to do tasks and in learning in general."

- Participant H

5. Was not Affected

This subtheme refers to the participants' experiences of not being affected by the factors that contribute to the challenges of flexible learning.

"It didn't really affect my studies because despite facing many struggles I continued to have positivity and keep moving forward."

- Participant B

"Ah for me, bad internet connection doesn't affect my studies because I can always review my lessons in the module uploaded by the teacher in our learning platform."

- Participant C

"But this did not affect my studies negatively since the teachers have provided us modules of the lesson to keep us guided. "

- Participant G

6. Lack of time

This subtheme refers to the factor of not having sufficient time for the workload given to the participants.

"One of the challenges I encountered is being given multiple modules to be answered within a short period of time."

- Participant D

"Main factors are primarily related to lack of time."

- Participant E

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the study, the researchers were able to gather data from a total of 11 senior high school students from different schools with different learning modes. When they were asked about their perspectives on the new modes of learning in general, the results were mixed, having most of them state that it was difficult to adapt to the new normal with Participant F stating that it is different from the physical face-to-face classes and that some students do not have access to gadgets or proper equipment as others.

Summary Of Findings

1. How do the students describe their experiences after a few months of adapting to a new mode of learning?

1.1 Effective. The researchers have discovered that the participants experienced it as an effective alternative of continuing the flow of education and learning amidst the pandemic.

1.2 Safe. The participants stated that the new modes of learning greatly benefit them in learning during the pandemic without affecting their health and status.

1.3 Difficult. The researchers have discovered that some of the participants see and experience the new modes of learning to be difficult, struggling or having a hard time during the pandemic.

2. What are your perspectives in the new mode of learning during the new normal?

2.1 Potential Problems. The participants find the potential problems to be a factor as to why some students are struggling in learning during the pandemic. Speculations occurred to some participants that there may be events that could be a problem.

2.2 Adjust to Adapt. Some participants have considered that adjusting and adapting to the new modes of learning is something that students must accept in order for academic events to go as planned..

2.3 Positive. Participants have stated that the new modes of learning prove to be positive and effective for students and teachers. Good things come around, to some people they see hope amidst the pandemic.

3. What are the challenges that the students encountered and how did it affect their studies?

3.1 Internet. Connection on the web is a huge factor when it comes to online learning, and most of the participants find that the poor internet connectivity is proving to be a problem in terms of learning during the pandemic.

3.2 Personal Struggles. Some participants find that the workload is too much for their liking. As a result, they start losing motivation and interest in complying with tasks. Not everyone has the same problem, we all have our own problems and have a unique solution to solve it.

3.3 Environment. One participant stated that the environment around him is setting up a problem for his academics. This is one of the factors where a student's motivation and interest can be greatly impacted.

3.4 Miscommunication. One participant finds the miscommunication is a major problem because

this results in him not being able to understand the instructions properly given to him by the teacher. Misunderstanding or misinterpretation could be one crucial thing when it comes to building a connection or coming down to an understanding.

3.5 Not Affected. The researchers have discovered that three participants do not get affected by these factors even if they experience these.

3.6 Lack of time. This is one of the most common problems presented by the students in this new normal mode of learning wherein students don't have an adequate amount of time to pass all required tasks given by their respective subject teacher and some of the participants are describing it as a challenge in the study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the participants describe their experiences on new modes of learning as being effective, safe, but a little bit difficult. In terms of perspectives, the participants stated that they have potential problems, adjusting to adapt and having a positive outlook. Most of the participants responded as they have potential problems and are the main reason why students struggle to learn in this pandemic. According to M. Adnan & K. Anwar(2020),stated that students reported a few other issues like lack of interaction with the instructor, response time, and absence of traditional classroom socialization. In comparison to the researcher's study, this is connected because both our studies shared the same responses between student's regarding difficulties with time and miscommunication. And last but not the least, the researchers also identified the challenges that the participants encountered which are Internet, Personal Struggles, Environment, Miscommunication, Not Affected and Lack of time. Among the six challenges encountered, the internet is the most stated complaint by the participants of the researcher's study.

Recommendations

In this study, the researchers found out about the participants' experiences, perspectives and challenges in this new normal mode of learning. In line with this, the researchers have come up with the following recommendations:

- Strengthen the relationship between teachers and students and continuously monitor the performance of their students in their respective subject areas.
- The school may implement ways to make learning conducive and more interactive amidst this pandemic and to mitigate the challenges encountered by the students.
- The student may find a suitable environment wherein he/she can attend their classes without distractions and without losing their focus and concentration.

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