



A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF RESILIENT STUDENTS AMIDST PANDEMIC

Rowena A. Baloyo, Joriza Lou Trillanes

ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of seven students to delved their issues and concerns during the pandemic and their coping mechanisms they adopted during the online classes. The researcher used in depth interview with the use of semi-structured interview questions of student's real life during the pandemic.. The key informants were purposively selected students from North Eastern Mindanao State University with the following inclusion criteria: a) they must be a student who is currently enrolled in the semester and b) the modality of teaching in the current semester is through the use of online classes. The data were gathered through the use of recorded interviews which were analyzed through Thematic Analysis. Findings revealed the following issues associated with resiliency : 1) internet connectivity 2) flexibility to new learning modality 4) financial problems. As to their coping mechanisms, the following themes were revealed: 1) positive outlook 2) strong motivation 4) support from teachers

Base on the findings, necessary steps should be undertaken in order to the students to cope up with the new learning modality. Since the mental health of the students also were affected likewise be conducted. Through this undertaking, students will be able to adjust or become resilient to cope up with adversities that affected their learning.

KEYWORDS: *resiliency, lived experiences, covid-19, phenomenological study method*

INTRODUCTION

The spreading and menacing effects of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has created a crisis with a severe effect on the masses. Education in particular had been affected across the world. Education was jeopardized and students were affected by such unprecedented phenomena. According to Singh et. al (2020), it is critical for the students to take steps in building their resilient characters and coping with its damaging consequences that is brought forth by the COVID – 19 pandemic.

From the global perspective, a whopping number of 1.54 billion students worldwide, including those in higher education, are reported by UNESCO to be jeopardized by the closing of the institutions (Giannini & Albrectsen, 2020). Hence, the lockdown has profound repercussions for the students (Sahu, 2020). In this current situation conventional methods that are unsuited being set aside, the mass transition to the online medium of learning have exerted an unprecedented effect on the students (Baloran, 2020). The students are pushed with this ordeal and have to embrace the change for continual and unhampered academic growth (Corbera et al., 2020). There is, therefore, a need to integrate being resilient together with the pedagogical approach of the instructors.

According to Guillasper et al. (2021), resilience is a vital psychological factor and personal resource that makes students less susceptible to the negative impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and helps lessen the adverse impact of the pandemic on the quality of life (QoL) of students. Furthermore, understanding the factors and developing strategies that build the resilience of students in a focal point of action for them. Failure to recognize the negative

effect of COVID-19 pandemic and other major life events on the QoL of students may result in detrimental consequences. Similarly, the study of Guillasper et al. (2021) highlighted the protective and cushioning role of resilient characters of Filipino students in the context of the COVID-19. With this, different alternative learning modes are offered by different learning institutions, including state universities.

Just like any other schools across the globe, the students from Surigao Del Sur State University has experienced inconvenience and disruptions in academic activities due to the menacing effects of COVID - 19. However, despite of displacement and economic drawbacks that brought by the pandemic, education must never stop. The students found it hard especially everything happened abruptly. One of the ways to handle the current situation is to instill the positive virtue of resilience among the learners so that they will not give up with their dreams and at the same time be safe. Thus this study is conducted to know and understand how the students should address their adjustment the new modality of learning during pandemic.

METHODS

This study employed qualitative design of research using the phenomenological method. The key informants of this study were seven college students who were chosen through purposive sampling. Fictitious names were given to them in order to them in order to adhere to ethical considerations. Data were collected through in depth interview with the use of semi-structured questionnaire. The key informants were college students from North Eastern Mindanao State University. The said research



design was appropriate for this kind of study since according to Groenewald (2004). Using phenomenological method of qualitative research would be practical in understanding the observable characteristics of a phenomenon or exploring the lived experiences of the subjects. In relation to the current study, the phenomenological method was used in giving meaning to the experiences of the students during the pandemic that are relevant to academic resiliency.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in order to understand the lived experiences of the students of on their academic resilience on the new mode of learning during pandemic.

Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences encountered by the college students that pertains to academic resilience during the new normal delivery mode due to COVID – 19 pandemic?
2. What are the challenge that the college students met during the new modality of learning during pandemic?
3. What are the coping mechanisms of students in order to be resilient in their learning during pandemic?
4. What is the implication of this study in teaching social science?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The world is currently facing COVID-19 pandemic and is widely-spreading across various countries. A number of initiatives are introduced by the government to limit the spread since the beginning of the pandemic. The citizens are encouraged to implement social and physical distancing to ensure the safety between individuals and to reduce unnecessary activities outside the home (Widyaningrum et al., 2020). The education sector was affected by the pandemic, pursuant to the Circular Letter of the Directorate of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 1 of 2020 on COVID-19 Prevention in Higher Institutions. It mandated the higher institution to alter the learning activities into online learning system or distance learning and suggests the student to study from their home. To the reason that, this policy was promulgated, all levels of education especially universities, started to implement distance or online learning in order learning activities can be conducted as usual. In connection to this matter, Purwanto et al. (2020) that this paradigm is considered new which means that not all students are accustomed to online learning activities. In this case, the students face a number of challenges and difficulties, especially in regards adaptation to the new learning method that is less effective than face-to-face learning.

Educational institution are having closures due to the outbreak of COVID-19 lead to an unprecedented impact on education. During the lockdown, the teachers are instructed to teach via online learning platforms (Abidah et al. 2020). Another study of Raju (2020) it was revealed in his study that it is necessary to adopt innovative teaching for the continuation of education and to win against mental stress and anxieties during the lockdown,

specifically for the students. The threat of COVID-19 results in the digital revolution in the higher education via online lectures, teleconferencing, digital open books, online examination, and interaction at virtual environments (Strielkowski, 2020; Kumar, 2020). Another study of (Gonzalez et al. 2020) revealed that there is a significant positive impact of the current pandemic learning efficiency and performances by adopting online learning strategies. The online mode of the teaching-learning process is often discriminatory to poor and marginalized students (Manzoor, 2020).

Vansteenkiste (2006, 2007) claimed that SDT proved the usefulness for understanding diversity in student learning approaches, success and persistence. In addition to the concepts of autonomous versus controlled motivation for learning-related behaviors, SDT researchers (Kasser & Ryan, 1996) had increasingly put more attention to the individual targets that students concentrate on. Students are said to have a natural propensity to give focus on the intrinsic and growth-oriented goals rather than extrinsic and out-of-the-box goals for them to find interesting on the new mode of learning amidst COVID-19 pandemic. The intrinsic goals are theorized to be more specifically related to the fulfillment of the essential psychological need of the students for competence, partnership and autonomy. The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic purposes was originally used to assess psychological health and well being of the students.

On the other hand, in the initial study of Rahiem (2020), students were found out to be able to complete one semester of study and obtained good grades so it means that even the pandemic can't be a hindrance for them to fulfill all the school works they had. By understanding students motivation, teachers or the instructors can learn what helps the students learn despite the varying limitations amidst this pandemic COVID-19. Also, by learning more about student motivation, it can help and prepare students to be more resilient in challenging times in the future. Additionally, information involved will contribute to the teachers to understand the learning process better from a student's perspective, which may positively influence their strategies on teaching amidst COVID-19 pandemic.

Another study of Amelasasih et al. (2019), resilience is the ability of a person to adapt and overcome difficult times at hand, particularly during today's pandemic. More so, the ability to adapt from risks, difficulties, and some monumental adverse events constructively and positively (Compton & Hoffman, 2013). On the other hand, Hendriani (2018), stated that is an individual's ability to cope with stress and learn from negative emotional experiences. In the context of higher education, students are expected to be resilient in facing academic challenges, also known as academic resilience (Gizir as cited in Sari & Indrawati, 2017).



Universities educate vast majority of decision-makers in the workforce, whether employed in academia, government, health, education, arts, business or other field. Increasingly, the university leaders, governments, industries and donors are using ranking in universities to assess the success or failure of higher education institutions (Esposito and Stark 2019; Hazelkorn 2017; Yudkevich et al. 2016). However, these rankings tells nothing in regards how the universities are challenging or amplifying structures, policies and practices that are pivotal to global responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic is reconfiguring the entire field of higher education in which many face-to-face classes are now online, and while some institutions have adjusted easily but others without the same resources have struggled or failed completely. Additionally, many students are lacking personal resources (such as internet capacity) to participate in their online classes. Hence, the people need to understand the impact of the pandemic on the higher education as a field of power. Above all, rankings do not measure the ability of universities to respond to crises in ways that serve their particular communities. Many countries are advance in terms of technology already had e-learning and online education programs in place when the pandemic first began. In the developing countries, where internet service and technological equipment availability is often limited resulted learning adaptation more complicated (Farooq et al., 2020).

One of the essential factors in achieving subjective well-being is through having resilient characters (Erniati & Sari, 2018). Resilience per se is a student's process in surviving in the face of adversity or other conditions that cause to feel depressed, miserable, or traumatized. (Reivich and Shatte 2015, as cited in Saputra, 2020) supported the idea that resilience is the capacity of giving healthy and productive responses in facing challenging events to control the pressure. It can be defined as a concept that describes a student's capabilities in overcoming and adapting to difficult times which means that resilience might determine one's success and failure in life (Mufidah, 2017). For students, academic resilience is of paramount importance and according to Wang and Gordon (2016) as cited by Utami (2020), learners with academic resilience can change a challenging environment into a source of motivation by maintaining hopes, orienting themselves with goals, and having problem-solving skills. Ergo, based on various reviews explained above that students who have the

capacity to become resilient might also have high subjective well-being in facing online learning challenges during the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Sari & Indrawati, (2017), academic resilience is the ability of a student to get on its feet, survive, or adapt to the pressure and challenging conditions in the academic field. Students who carry out academic resilience are students who can face four conditions, namely setbacks, challenges, adversity, and pressure in the academic context. Based on this explanation, academic resilience is very useful in facing the challenges of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Student has the ability to rise, survive, or adapt in the face of pressure and challenging conditions in the academic field through possessing academic resilience (Sari & Indrawati, 2017). This allows students to overcome adversity or negative emotions to adapt to online learning during the pandemic of COVID-19, which also leads to improved mental health. Academic resilience has the ability to change stressful events into opportunities for growth and allows students to obtain personal benefits (Oyoo, Mwaura, & Kinai, 2018).

In education, the government has encouraged studying to be done from home to prevent transmission of the virus (Mendikbud," 2020). Study from Home (SFH) is meant to be learning that is done online and at home. According to Putranti (2013), online learning is a form of distance learning using internet facilities to communicate online. According to Setiawan (2020), the online learnings advantages include: being able to expand access to education for the general public and business because a flexible scheduling structure can lessen the affect of many time and place constraints. Handing over some activities outside the location reduces institutional capacity constraints arising from the need for infrastructure buildings.it has a potential to increase access to more flare-ups from diverse geographic, social, cultural, economic and experiential backgrounds. On the other hand, distance learning also has its own disadvantages, including barriers to effective learning such as new environment distractions and unreliable technology, inadequate interaction between students and teachers, and the need for more experience. On account of these shortcomings, students can experience stress (Novitasari, Kurniawan, & Kanita, 2020).



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Themes	Codes
Internet Connectivity Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard time connecting • Absence of internet connection • Absence of mobile data • Weak internet signal
Flexibility to new learning modality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust to the new modality of learning • Adjust to virtual classes • Learning new mode of learning such as using new platforms • Struggle to adjust to new learning • Looking for an area for strong connection
New study environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconvenient study environment • No comfortable study area • Doing multiple tasks while studying • No concentration in studying • Finding for a place to study
Financial Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No enough budget to buy gadgets • No laptop or cellphone needed for studying
Coping Mechanisms	Codes
Positive Outlook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believing in oneself • Adjust to the new learning set up • Trying one’s best to cope • Dedication to study
Strong Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong determination to finish schooling • Pursue studies during this pandemic • Take the situation as challenge
Support from teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers leniency • Reaching out to teachers • Having an open communication with teachers

DISCUSSION

The concept of students’ resiliency was examined from a phenomenological interview based on the lived experiences of students amidst the pandemic. The most significant shared themes characterizing the ten key informants’ lived experiences were: **internet connectivity issues, flexibility to new learning modality, new study environment, and financial problem.** According to the Resilience Theory, a person can bounce back in life after experiencing an adverse situation in a strength-focused approach. Also stated in the Educational Productivity Theory, during the COVID – 19 pandemic, the learner’s affective, physiological, and cognitive learning are negatively affected. The results of this study are consistent with these findings.

The key informants primarily experienced **internet connectivity issues.** They expressed how difficult it was to maintain the connection and be stressed at the same time. According to Purwanto et al. (2020), this paradigm is considered new which means that not all students are accustomed to online learning activities. In this case, the students face a number of challenges and difficulties, especially in regards to adaptation to the new learning method that is less effective than face-to-face learning. Moreover, one informant struggled with online learning because of a lack of gadgets. In developing countries, where internet service and technological equipment availability is often limited resulted learning adaptation is more complicated (Farooq et al., 2020).

Some key informants thought that the new normal learning setup is quite difficult and challenging. According to (Novitasari,



Kurniawan, & Kanita, 2020), distance learning also has its own disadvantages, including barriers to effective learning such as new environment distractions and unreliable technology, inadequate interaction between students and teachers, and the need for more experience. On account of these shortcomings, students can experience stress. In consonance with Mubin, & Basthomi (2020), some college students were stressed during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the online learning process related to the competitive academic pressures overwhelmed them with more lessons content and less leisure time.

One key informant struggled from the inconvenient study environment. According to Kapasia et al. (2020), those from remote areas and disadvantaged parts, were confronted with various problems related to depression, poor network connectivity, and an unfavourable home study environment. Another issue or concern of the key informant was the financial problem.

To get an account of students' lived experiences their parents and teachers were also being interviewed. Parents' observations on students were the following: financial problem, less motivation in studying, internet connection issues/signal problem, and some positive traits during the pandemic. On the other hand, this study also revealed the teachers' observations of students such as their behaviour during class, their motivation in doing their tasks at home, problems/difficulties encountered in the new normal learning, and personal problem / financial problem. Both parties were asked about their opinion and thoughts about the students' resiliency and their observation of how these students coped with their issues and concerns during the pandemic. To some extent, both the parents and teachers verified the issues and concerns that the key informants experienced.

As per observation on how their children/students coped with the issues and concerns, similarly, they thought that one must be being strategic. One parent emphasized the positive effects of a strong support system. In line with this, open communication and having some thoughtful teachers helped the students. On the other hand, two teachers expressed their observations. They believed that their students were passionate learners and that they were not easily swayed by the situation. Another teacher also expressed and highlighted the value of reaching out.

The students in this study also expressed how they coped with the issues and concerns they have encountered. Their ways of coping included positive thinking, strong motivation and being strategic. Three of the Key Informants instilled the habit of positive thinking for the sake of their family and for the future. Two of the Key Informants used these circumstances as a strong motivation to stay on track despite the drastic changes that Covid19 brought to their lives. One informant thought of reaching out as a way of coping and the other informant conveyed the idea of being strategic. They thought that being strategic could help them achieve their goals. According to Bonanno (2004), strong

individuals have positive characteristics in an optimistic attitude, self-improvement, and resilience, have the right coping strategies, and has a lesser chance to experience psychological problems. Thus, students need to demonstrate resilience during online learning in this pandemic, which is called academic resilience.

Throughout the lived experiences of the students in this pandemic, they have consciously found ways how to cope and address the issues they have encountered. According to Dhawan (2020), the students need to overcome all of the unexpected learning changes as quickly as possible in order for them to achieve their goals. Lack of certainty, insecurity, volatility and reduced autonomy and self-directedness are typical feelings encountered by students during the pandemic crisis (Germani et al., 2020). In addition the students staying at home, worrying about the safety, changing their usual school routine, and not being able to interact face-to-face with friends affect their mental well-being (Husky et al., 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

The result of this study revealed that the factors which affect the lived experiences of the students during the new delivery mode of learning during pandemic included internet connectivity issues, new learning modalities, new study environment and financial difficulties. According to Dhawan (2020), the students need to overcome all of the unexpected learning changes as quickly as possible in order for them to achieve their goals. One of the elements needed for the students in achieving subjective well-being is resilience by Erniati & Sari (2018). It is the ability to constructively and positively adapt to risks, difficulties, and several monumental adverse events (Compton & Hoffman, 2013).

According to Cooper et al. (2020), increasing students' resilience has been shown to be an important strategy to help them bounce back from adversity when faced with various stressors and stress-inducing events and traumatic situations (Cooper et al., 2020). With the coping skills of the students, it improves class attendance, participation, persistence even when faced with setbacks or failure in general, and arm them with stronger resilient self who can lead to a much more positive learning experience. Most students are struggling in their academic performance because of the problems brought by pandemic. College is the most challenging stage in a student's journey towards success because this will prepare them as they step out of school and enter the real world. However, because of these unexpected times, the students are experiencing a stressful time in the going through the process of shifting from face-to-face learning approach to new educational and social environment.

However, it is believed that certain factors may allow some students to succeed academically as a matter of fact that they have different strategies to cope up with the problems and happening in life, such as stress coping skills. When college students are facing stressful life events, they typically use many kinds of



coping strategies to deal with them because teenager nowadays have different strategies to cope up with their emotional problems. They use different coping strategies to overcome the problems.

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded first of all that much of the lived experiences of the students in the new normal has to do with internet connectivity issues due to unstable networks or no signal because of their location. This primarily led to reliability and performance issues that can result to students getting distracted, falling behind, or having limited access to the classroom resources they need. According to Dagdag et al. (2019), the students have their own unique emotional needs and it should not be ignored if students are expected to maximize their potential in learning specially amidst this pandemic. Hence, the school should be oriented in coping up with learning adversaries and know the strategies that will help the students to be interested in the new mode of learning as well as practical ways to support the learning system and school environment.

Increasing students' resilience has been shown to be an important strategy to help them bounce back from adversity when faced with various stressors and stress-inducing events and traumatic situations (Cooper et al., 2020).

The family and parents have an important role on the students' resilient character development. Their support is vital to the students' success such as creating a regular routine and encourage good study habits. Also help them to set up an environment and space conducive for online learning.

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