ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 3| March 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

PERSONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RELATED FACTORS AFFECTING FRESHMEN STUDENTS IN ONLINE DISTANCE LEARNING: BASIS FOR INTERVENTION MEASURE

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra20668
DOI No: 10.36713/epra20668

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted traditional education, necessitating a shift to online distance learning. This study investigates the personal and environmental factors affecting the academic productivity of freshmen students at Pamantasan ng Cabuyao during the new normal. Employing a mixed-method exploratory design, the research gathered qualitative and quantitative data from 332 first-year students across eight programs and five guidance counselors. Key personal factors examined include motivation, study habits, and mental health, while environmental factors encompass parental support, home learning environment, and community quarantine status.

Findings reveal that both personal and environmental factors significantly influence students' academic performance. Motivation and study habits were consistently applied, while mental health challenges highlighted the need for stress management and resilience-building strategies. Parental support and a conducive home learning environment were critical in sustaining academic productivity, even amidst community quarantine restrictions. The study also identified mild challenges encountered by students in adapting to online learning.

A proposed intervention measure, including a stress management module, was developed and deemed acceptable by guidance counselors for its potential to enhance academic and personal growth. The study concludes that addressing both personal and environmental factors is essential for improving the online learning experience and recommends targeted interventions to support students' holistic development.

KEY WORD: *Online Distance Learning, Academic Productivity, Personal Factors, Environmental Factors,Intervention Measures*

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid shift to online distance learning (ODL) has significantly transformed the educational landscape, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This transition has posed unique challenges for freshman students, who are navigating the complexities of higher education while adapting to a virtual learning environment. The success of these students in ODL is influenced by a combination of personal and environmental factors, which play a critical role in shaping their academic performance and overall well-being. Understanding these factors is essential for developing effective intervention measures to support students in this new educational paradigm.

Personal factors, such as self-discipline, time management, motivation, and technological proficiency, are pivotal in determining a student's ability to thrive in ODL. Freshman students often face difficulties in self-regulation, which can lead to disorganization and reduced engagement with coursework. The absence of traditional classroom structures further exacerbates these challenges, as students must independently manage their schedules and maintain motivation. Additionally, technological proficiency is a critical skill in ODL, as students are required to navigate various digital platforms, troubleshoot technical issues, and communicate effectively in virtual settings (Barrot et al., 2021).

Environmental factors also play a significant role in shaping the ODL experience. A conducive learning environment, characterized by a quiet workspace, reliable internet connectivity, and minimal distractions, is essential for academic success. However, many students face challenges such as inadequate study spaces, frequent connectivity issues, and household responsibilities, which hinder their ability to focus and engage with their studies. The lack of face-to-face interactions and a sense of community further contributes to feelings of isolation and reduced social connectedness, which can negatively impact

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 3| March 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

student engagement and mental health (Malabarbas, 2022; Daniels et al., 2021).

The pandemic has highlighted the disparities in access to resources necessary for ODL. Privileged students with access to digital devices, stable internet, and supportive home environments are better equipped to adapt to this mode of learning. In contrast, students from less privileged backgrounds often struggle due to financial constraints and limited access to technology. These inequities underscore the need for targeted interventions to bridge the digital divide and ensure equitable access to education for all students (Garcia & Weiss, 2020; Malolos et al., 2021). For instance, modular learning, which was widely implemented during the pandemic, presented its own set of challenges, including limited teacher-student interaction and difficulties in monitoring student progress. These challenges significantly impacted students' academic behavior and performance, emphasizing the need for more effective support systems (Agarin, 2020).

The psychological and emotional well-being of students is another critical factor influencing their success in ODL. The abrupt shift to online learning has led to increased levels of anxiety, stress, and feelings of isolation among students. Freshman students, in particular, are vulnerable to these challenges as they transition to a new academic environment without the traditional support systems of face-to-face interactions. Addressing these mental health concerns is essential for fostering a positive and supportive learning experience (Barrot et al., 2021; Duraku et al., 2020). The lived experiences of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students transitioning from face-to-face to online learning highlight the importance of resilience, perseverance, and teacher support in overcoming these challenges (Eguia & Padro, 2023).

Despite these challenges, ODL also presents opportunities for students to develop new skills and adapt to innovative learning modalities. The flexibility of ODL allows students to manage their time more effectively and access a wealth of digital resources. Many students have reported improvements in their technological literacy, organizational skills, and ability to work independently. These positive outcomes highlight the potential of ODL to enhance student learning when supported by appropriate interventions (Asgharzadehbonab et al., 2022; Gonzales et al., 2020). However, it is important to address the negative impacts of ODL, such as reduced social interaction and increased screen time, which can affect students' overall well-being (Sharma, 2020).

Theoretical frameworks, such as Cognitive Counseling Theory, provide valuable insights into the interplay between personal and environmental factors in ODL. This theory emphasizes the role of cognitive processes in shaping behavior and highlights the importance of aligning students' thoughts and actions with their learning goals. By addressing faulty thinking patterns and promoting positive interpretations of the learning environment, educators can support students in overcoming challenges and achieving academic success (Reissing & VanZuylen, 2015).

The importance of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in education is further emphasized in the context of non-routine problem-solving. Research highlights the need for students to develop systematic approaches, adaptability, and reflective thinking to address complex challenges. These skills are particularly relevant in mathematics education, where students must navigate non-standard problems that require creative and logical reasoning. The integration of such skills into ODL can enhance students' ability to tackle real-world problems and foster a deeper understanding of academic concepts (Ferrer & Caballes, 2025). Similarly, the STEM strand in the Philippines has demonstrated the importance of equipping students with 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking and adaptability, to prepare them for future academic and professional challenges (Alvarez, 2024).

Educational institutions play a vital role in addressing the challenges of ODL by implementing targeted interventions and support systems. By providing access to digital resources, creating virtual communities, and promoting mental health initiatives, institutions can enhance the ODL experience for students. These efforts are essential for ensuring that all students, regardless of their personal or environmental circumstances, have the opportunity to succeed in this new educational landscape (Madan, 2023; Malolos et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the transition to ODL has brought both challenges and opportunities for freshman students. Personal factors such as self-discipline and technological proficiency, combined with environmental factors like access to resources and social support, significantly influence students' success in this learning modality. By understanding and addressing these factors, educators and policymakers can develop effective intervention measures to support freshman students in ODL and ensure their academic and personal growth.

The study aimed to determine the personal-related factors and environmental-related factors affecting freshmen students of the University of Cabuyao (Pamantasan ng Cabuyao) in online distance learning as basis for developing an intervention measure.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-problems:
1. How do the freshmen students assess the personal-related factors in terms of:
1.1. Motivation;
1.2. Study Habit; and
1.3. Mental Health?
2. How do the freshmen students assess the environmental-related factors in terms of:
2.1. Parental Support;
2.2. Home Learning Environment; and
2.3. Community Quarantine Status Level?
3. Is there any significant relationship between personal and the

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environmental related factors affecting the freshmen students of University of Cabuyao (Pamantasan ng Cabuyao)?
4. What are the problems encountered by the respondents?
5. Based on the findings, what intervention measure may be proposed?
6. How acceptable is the proposed intervention measure?

2. METHOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-method research design, specifically an exploratory sequential design, to examine the personal and environmental factors affecting freshmen students in online distance learning. Mixed-method research integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena (Alavi et al., 2022). In the first phase, qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to explore students' experiences and challenges. These findings informed the second phase, where survey questionnaires were administered to a larger group of respondents to validate and quantify the qualitative insights. This approach is particularly effective for studies with limited prior knowledge of the research topic, as it allows for an initial exploration before quantification (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2020). By combining these methods, the study ensured a holistic assessment of the factors influencing online distance learning, with qualitative data providing contextual depth and quantitative data offering measurable insights for targeted interventions (Molina-Azorin, 2021).

2.2. Population and Sampling

The target population of this study consisted of freshmen students enrolled in various academic programs at the University of Cabuyao (Pamantasan ng Cabuyao). A sample size of 332 students was determined using Slovin's formula, representing the total population of 1,931 freshmen students. Simple random sampling, a probability sampling technique, was employed to ensure that each student had an equal chance of being selected, as described by Smith et al. (2023). This method allowed for the unbiased selection of participants from different programs, ensuring the representativeness of the sample. The distribution of respondents across eight programs showed that the majority were from Engineering (86 respondents), followed by IT (58), Education (57), Psychology (41), Marketing (29), Finance (28), Nursing (19), and Accountancy (14).

Additionally, five guidance counselors participated in qualitative interviews to provide further insights into the factors affecting online distance learning. Among them, 2 guidance counselors (40%) had 1–5 years of service, 2 (40%) had 6–10 years of service, and 1 (20%) had 16–20 years of service. In terms of age, 2 guidance counselors (40%) were 36–40 years old, while 1 (20%) was 25–30 years old, 1 (20%) was 31–35 years old, and 1 (20%) was 55–60 years old. Regarding gender, 3 guidance counselors (60%) were female, and 2 (40%) were male. This diverse group of guidance counselors provided valuable perspectives based on their varying lengths of service, age, and gender, enriching the qualitative component of the study.

2.3. Research Instrument

The study utilized two research instruments to gather data. First, a researcher-made survey questionnaire was developed and divided into four parts. Part I focused on the demographic profile of the respondents, including the age and sex of the guidance counselors and the academic programs of the student respondents at the University of Cabuyao (Pamantasan ng Cabuyao). Part II examined the personal-related and environmental-related factors affecting the online distance learning of freshmen students. Part III identified the problems encountered by the respondents, while Part IV assessed the acceptability of the proposed intervention measure module. The questionnaire was validated through consultations with the research adviser, administrators, and teachers who were not part of the study. Revisions were made based on their feedback, and a dry run was conducted with a group outside the study sample to ensure the instrument's clarity and relevance. Additionally, pilot testing with 30 freshmen students from various courses was conducted to measure the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha, ensuring its consistency and acceptability.

Table 1. ***Verbal Interpretation for Personal- and Environmental-Related Factors***

Option	Verbal Interpretation	Equivalent Points	*Symbol*
5	Applied to me always	4.21 – 5.00	*AA*
4	Applied to me very much or most of the time	3.41 – 4.20	*AVM*
3	Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time	2.61 – 3.40	*ACD*
2	Applied to me to some degree or some of the time	1.81 – 2.60	*ASD*
1	Did not apply to me at all	1.00 – 1.80	*DA*

Table 2. ***Verbal Interpretation for Problem Encountered***

Option	Verbal Interpretation	Equivalent Points	*Symbol*
5	Very Much Encountered	4.21 – 5.00	*VME*
4	Much Encountered	3.41 – 4.20	*ME*
3	Slightly Encountered	2.61 – 3.40	*SE*
2	Least Encountered	1.81 – 2.60	*LE*
1	Not Encountered	1.00 – 1.80	*NE*

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Table 3. ***Cronbach Alpha Result***

VARIABLES	Cronbach's Alpha Result	Degree of Reliability
Motivation	0.885	Good
study habit	0.865	Good
mental health	0.844	Good
parent support	0.888	Good
home learning environment	0.865	Good
community quarantine	0.916	Excellent
Problems Encountered	0.919	Excellent

The second instrument was structured interviews, which were conducted with two guidance counselors from different universities to gather qualitative data. This method involved asking a formal series of questions in a specific order to obtain insights into the acceptability of the proposed intervention measure module for the University of Cabuyao. The interviews were systematically documented to ensure accuracy and consistency in data collection. These instruments were carefully designed and validated to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the data collected, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting online distance learning and the acceptability of the proposed intervention measure.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedures

The data gathering procedures for this study were conducted systematically to ensure accuracy and reliability. Approval was first secured from the research facilitator to conduct the study, followed by the formulation and finalization of the survey questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. Once approved, the survey questionnaires were distributed to selected freshmen students from various courses at the University of Cabuyao (Pamantasan ng Cabuyao). After retrieval, the data were tabulated and analyzed with the assistance of a statistician to ensure accurate computations and alignment with the research problems. Finally, the results were presented in both textual and tabular formats to provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of the findings.

2.5. Mixed-Method Analysis

The mixed-method analysis in this study utilized a **sequential exploratory design**, where qualitative and quantitative data were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the personal and environmental factors affecting freshmen students in online distance learning. The process began with the collection and analysis of qualitative data, which provided in-depth insights into the students' experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms. These qualitative findings were then used to inform the development of the quantitative phase, ensuring that the survey instruments and data collection methods were aligned with the themes and patterns identified in the qualitative data.

The integration of data followed a **merging-converging approach**, where both qualitative and quantitative findings were analyzed together to identify commonalities, differences, and relationships. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of how personal factors, such as motivation, study habits, and mental health, interact with environmental factors, such as parental support, home learning environment, and community quarantine conditions. By merging the two datasets, the study was able to validate the qualitative findings with quantitative evidence and vice versa, ensuring the reliability and robustness of the results.

The analysis also employed a **connecting strategy**, where qualitative data were used to explain and contextualize the quantitative results. For example, while the quantitative data provided numerical evidence of the students' levels of motivation and mental health, the qualitative data offered rich narratives that explained the underlying reasons for these levels. This connection between the two datasets allowed for a more nuanced interpretation of the findings, highlighting the specific interventions needed to address the challenges faced by students.
Overall, the mixed-method process ensured that the study captured both the breadth and depth of the students' experiences in online distance learning. The sequential exploratory design, combined with merging-converging and connecting strategies, provided a holistic understanding of the factors influencing students' academic performance and well-being during the pandemic.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 4. ***Personal-related factors as to Motivation***

MOTIVATION	Mean	VI	RANK
I am eager to learn more.	4.14	AVM	1
I find myself interested in learning with online class setup.	3.49	AVM	6
I feel elated to listen during lectures.	3.68	AVM	4.5
I am excited to attend my online class.	3.68	AVM	4.5
I encourage my friends or classmates to attend online classes.	3.90	AVM	2
I am persistent with my scores and grades.	3.80	AVM	3
I am active in participating in class discussions.	3.44	AVM	7

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Table 5. ***Personal-related factors as to Study Habit***

STUDY HABIT	Mean	VI	RANK
I always attend my classes on time to show respect and willingness to learn.	4.57	AA	1
I frequently take down notes every online lecture for reference in quizzes and examinations.	3.89	AVM	5
I constantly review every discussed lesson when there are upcoming quizzes or examinations.	3.93	AVM	4
I always believe and practice the saying, "Honesty is the best policy."	4.29	AA	3
I usually set time for study and leisure equally.	3.84	AVM	6
I sleep early to have enough sleeping hours to optimize my mood to learn the next day.	3.31	ACD	7
I always submit all my school requirements before deadline.	4.54	AA	2
Composite Weighted Mean	**4.05**	**AVM**	

Table 6. ***Personal-related factors as of Mental Health***

MENTAL HEALTH	Mean	VI	RANK
I have been mentally stable since online distance learning started.	3.28	ACD	7
I maintain peace of mind in new normal learning.	3.36	ACD	5
I have a healthy and robust lifestyle while studying online.	3.33	ACD	6
I manage my thoughts properly.	3.53	AVM	3
I am optimistic to learn every day.	3.79	AVM	2
I feel calm about the new learning setup.	3.50	AVM	4
I have a clear mindset to continue and finish my program whether face-to-face or online.	4.21	AA	1
Composite Weighted Mean	**3.57**	**AVM**	

Table 7. ***Summary on the personal-related factors***

Indicators	Composite Weighted mean	VI	RANK
Motivation	3.73	AVM	2
Study Habit	4.05	AVM	1
Mental Health	3.57	AVM	3
Grand mean	**3.78**	**AVM**	

The study highlights Study Habit as the most highly rated and important factor that affected freshmen students in online distance learning, followed by Motivation. Mental Health, although still recognized as a factor, received a lower rating compared to the other two indicators. These findings suggested that improving study habits and motivation could have a significant impact on enhancing the learning of the students during new normal learning. Additionally, addressed mental health concerns further contributed to overall student well-being and academic success.

The study highlighted the importance of motivation for freshmen student's learning through online distance learning. The module included strategies and techniques to boost motivation among freshmen students, such as setting goals, finding intrinsic motivation, and cultivating a positive mindset. Similarly, the study also emphasized the role of study habits the learning of the students. The module provides guidance on effective study techniques, time management, note-taking skills, and creating a conducive study environment to help students develop good study habits. Lastly, the study has recognized the impact of mental health on their learning. The module can address mental health concerns by promoting stress management techniques, resilience building, self-care practices, and seeking support from counselors or mental health professionals when needed.

Table 8. ***Environmental-related factors as to Parental Support***

PARENT SUPPORT	Mean	VI	RANK
My parents are aware of my online class schedule.	4.00	AVM	3
I get reminded by my parents of my upcoming classes.	3.34	ACD	6
My parents bring food or snacks when I'm in class.	3.05	ACD	7
I feel the concern of my parents about my studies.	3.85	AVM	5
My parents sustain my financial needs.	4.15	AVM	1
I feel the moral support of my parents.	4.04	AVM	2
My parents respect my personal study place and keep my surroundings quiet every time I have my online class.	3.97	AVM	4
Composite Weighted Mean	**3.77**	**AVM**	

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Table 9. ***Environmental-related factors as to Home Learning Environment***

HOME LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	Mean	VI	RANK
I have my own space or study place.	3.56	AVM	2
I feel comfortable while learning in my study environment.	3.59	AVM	1
I am at peace during class because it's quiet around me.	3.38	ACD	3
I have a spacious study environment.	3.26	ACD	5.5
I share my study space with my siblings.	3.26	ACD	5.5
I have a home learning-friendly environment.	3.34	ACD	4
I have an open study space where other people are lounging while I study.	3.18	ACD	7
Grand Mean	**3.37**	**ACD**	

Table 10. ***Environmental-related factors as to Community Quarantine Status Level***

COMMUNITY QUARANTINE	Mean	VI	RANK
I still learn adequately despite the community quarantine.	3.81	AVM	6
I focus my attention on my online classes and don't mind the unfavorable effects of community quarantine.	3.59	AVM	7
I stay attentive in my online classes despite the changes regarding the community quarantine.	3.84	AVM	5
I understand and see the essence of online distance learning during the community quarantine period.	4.05	AVM	2
I persist in continuing my online class under community quarantine.	3.96	AVM	3
I manage my study very well despite the enforced community quarantine	3.84	AVM	4
I obey protocols under community quarantine just like following instructions in our online distance learning.	4.25	AA	1
Grand Mean	**3.91**	**AVM**	

Table 11. ***Summary in environmental-related factors***

Indicators	Grand mean	VI	RANK
Parental Support	3.77	AVM	2
Home Learning Environment	3.37	ACD	3
Community Quarantine Status Level	3.91	AVM	1
Grand mean	**3.68**	**AVM**	

The study highlights the Community Quarantine Status Level as the most highly rated and important factor for the learning environment of the freshmen students. Parental Support is also recognized as a significant factor that can positively impacted on students' education. The home learning environment, although still acknowledged as a factor, received a lower rating compared to the other two indicators. These findings suggested that ensuring a conducive learning environment, fostering parental support, and considering the effects of the quarantine status played a vital role in supporting students' learning and academic success.

The study highlighted the significance of parental support in academic learning of the students. The module provides guidance to parents on how they can actively support their freshmen students, such as creating a conducive learning environment at home, maintaining open communication, providing emotional support, and being aware of their child's online class schedule and requirements. Furthermore, the study identified the influence of the home learning environment on academic learning. The module offered tips and recommendations to optimize the home learning environment, including creating a designated study area, minimizing distractions, ensuring a quiet and comfortable space for learning, and fostering a supportive atmosphere at home. And finally, the study acknowledged the impact of the community quarantine on the freshmen students' learning. The module can provide guidance on adapting to the challenges posed by the community quarantine, such as managing online learning, dealing with limited resources, and finding alternative ways to stay engaged and connected with peers and teachers.

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Table 12. ***Relationship between the Personal-related factors (Motivation) and Environmental-related Factors***

Personal-related factors (Motivation) / Environmental-related factors	Pearson r	Interpretation	P -value	Interpretation	Decision
Parental support	0.347	Moderate Correlation	0.000	Significant at p <.05	Reject Ho
Home learning environment	0.397	Moderate Correlation	0.000	Significant at p <.05	Reject Ho
Community quarantine status level	0.531	High Correlation	0.000	Significant at p <.05e	Reject Ho

All the null hypothesis were rejected revealing that there were significant relationships between the personal-related factors in terms of Motivation and environmental that affected the freshmen students of Pamantasan ng Cabuyao. This implied that the person-related factors in terms of the motivation of the freshmen students were related from the environmental-related factors. As motivational factors of the freshmen increased, the environmental factors also increased. In order to encourage their children to behave well and show an interest in learning, parents must seize every chance (Moneva et al., 2020).

The capacity and interest of a student to be learned will be significantly enhanced by any efforts made to meet these demands. When parents support school attempted to increase pupils' academic motivation, learning for all students improved. Parents that were more engaged with their kids will inspired them to became motivated to achieve their objectives and will help them became more concentrated on their academic learning. Parents' influence and motivation have a positive impact on children's academic learning. When it comes to student accomplishment, motivation has a good impact on their learning.

Table 13. ***Relationship between the personal related factors (Study Habits) and Environmental-related Factors***

Personal-related factors (Study habit) / Environmental-related factors	Pearson Correlation		p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Parental support	0.333	Moderate Correlation	0.000	Significant at p <.05	Reject Ho
Home learning environment	0.309	Moderate Correlation	0.000	Significant at p <.05	Reject Ho
Community quarantine status level	0.503	Moderate Correlation	0.000	Significant at p <.05	Reject Ho

All the null hypothesis were rejected revealing that there were significant relationships between the personal-related factors in terms of Study Habit and environment affecting the freshmen students of Pamantasan ng Cabuyao. This implies that the person-related factors in terms of the Study Habits of the freshmen students have relationship from the environmental-related factors they experience in achieving learnings during new normal.

In order to sustained student engagement in an online curriculum, educators must comprehend the requirements, desires, and prior experiences of their students (Alberto et al., 2021). Students must be assisted in the development of self-regulated learning methods, including time management, metacognition, critical thinking, and effort regulation, in order to succeed academically. The pandemic also contributed to the pupils' psychological stress, which made it challenging for them to concentrate on their studies. They indicated sentiments of anxiety, exhaustion, loneliness, homesickness, sadness, and hopelessness. Concerns among the students included online examinations, preparations for university events, potential training delays, and the safety of their families from COVID-19.

Table 14. ***Relationship between the Personal-related factors (Mental Health) and Environmental-related Factors***

Personal-related factors (Mental health) / Environmental-related factors	Pearson Correlation		p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Parental support	0.441	Moderate Correlation	0.000	Significant at p <.05	Reject Ho
Home learning environment	0.466	Moderate Correlation	0.000	Significant at p <.05	Reject Ho
Community quarantine status level	0.531	High Correlation	0.000	With Significant at p <.05	Reject Ho

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All the null hypothesis were rejected revealing that there were significant relationships between the personal-related factors in terms of Mental health and environment affecting the freshmen students of Pamantasan ng Cabuyao. This implied that the person-related factors in terms of the Mental health of the freshmen students have relationship from the environmental-related factors they experience in achieving effective learning during new normal learning.

While calmness and trust were felt less strongly by the students, they did report feeling more discouraged, bored, confused, and anxious (Pena et al., 2021). All emotions, with the exception of boredom, were related to how connected students felt to their professors and peers. As a result, students who report feeling more connected to their teachers and peers tend to report more good feelings than negative ones. Since these might enhanced students' emotional states, it is essential to have focused on interpersonal connections and channels of communication among students as well as between students and teachers.

These findings, together with the beneficial techniques' teachers used in online classrooms during the pandemic, should aid in the development of future online courses and the deployment of support strategies to enhanced both the educational and emotional experiences of students.

Table 15. ***Problems encountered by the freshmen students in online distancing learning***

Problems Encountered	Mean	VI	RANK
1. During my online class setup, I am not very driven in terms of my academic and professional goals.	3.47	ME	3
2. I am having trouble managing my time effectively between my daily obligations and my academic obligations.	3.54	ME	2
3. College intervention measure policies don't seem to have been put into practice.	3.03	SE	9
4. I'm having trouble finding resources for independent learning.	3.42	ME	5
5. Since we are participating in an online distance learning, I am noticing a lack of instant communication between teachers and students.	3.54	ME	1
6. The lack of explicit directions and expectations to meet that were provided and received online was something I encountered.	3.43	ME	4
7. I regard myself to be lacking in technology or device to use for online remote learning.	3.16	SE	8
8. I don't regularly have access to the internet, which would be helpful for online distant learning.	2.89	SE	10
9. I lack concentration during collaborative work in my online class.	3.23	SE	6
10. I've seen that the online teaching method frequently suffers from a lack of responsibility, which lowers the standard of teaching.	3.20	SE	7
Grand Mean	**3.29**	**SE**	

The results from Table 15 revealed that freshmen students encountered various challenges in online distance learning, with a grand mean of 3.29, interpreted as "Slightly Encountered." Among the most significant issues were difficulties in managing time between academic and daily obligations (mean = 3.54), lack of instant communication with teachers (mean = 3.54), and reduced motivation to pursue academic and professional goals (mean = 3.47). Other challenges included limited resources for independent learning (mean = 3.42) and unclear directions or expectations in online classes (mean = 3.43). While some students reported issues with technology and internet access, these were less frequently encountered. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of the problems faced by students, which stem from both personal and systemic factors. The pandemic's disruption of traditional learning methods has exacerbated these challenges, requiring students to adapt to new learning environments and expectations.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced students' learning experiences, affecting their motivation, study habits, and mental health. Stress and lack of motivation were identified as key barriers to academic performance. The shift to online learning also required adjustments in teaching approaches and infrastructure, as noted by Aristeidou and Cross (2021), emphasizing the need for faculty to adapt to digital platforms. Additionally, environmental factors such as parental support, home learning conditions, and community quarantine levels played a critical role in shaping students' experiences. Parental involvement was hindered by technical, logistical, and financial challenges, as highlighted by Ribeiro et al. (2021). Furthermore, the home learning environment's quality, including noise, comfort, and distractions, directly impacted students' ability to focus and retain information. The emotional and social isolation caused by quarantine further compounded these issues, reducing students' overall performance and well-being, as supported by Meo et al. (2020). These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address both personal and environmental challenges in online learning.

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 3| March 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

Table 16. ***The themes that emerged from the shared experiences***

Themes	Statement of PC
Communication	**GC 1**: *My way of guidance is open communication. I assure the students that the classroom is a safe space for them.*
	GC 2: *I take action as a counselor by getting students involved in group activities and letting them know they can talk to me whenever they want.*
	GC 3: *Activities with online interactions also. Be creative and have more online resources or site that they can collaborate (padlet.com)*
Personal Problem and Mental Health management	**GC 1**: *I provide detailed information of scheduled consultations and assist them in certain factors that might influence them to be demotivated in class such as comprehension on online platform, availability of their concerned professors and the harmonious relationship in class*
	GC 2: Many school counselors and teachers are becoming increasingly concerned about mental health in schools. In order to support our students with mental health issues, school counselors play important responsibilities in the educational environment. One of my examples is when students get in touch with me and say they have trouble sleeping at night. I address this issue right away because it will have an impact on their academic achievement and general well-being.
	GC 4: As a guidance counselor, I am at my best reaching and monitoring my students through messenger and other online platforms. I attend immediately to their concerns especially when they say they are having anxiety and depression.
	GC 5: I and my co guidance counselor meet them at virtual seminars like talking about mental health.
Time Management	**GC 1**: I make a list of daily, weekly and even monthly short goals to help me concentrate and accomplish things.
	GC 2: Time management, task prioritization, maintaining concentration while studying, avoiding distractions, and dedication to your work are all ways to successfully complete your goals.
	GC 3: Time management, self-care and finding a support system.
	GC 4: I suggest they have to manage their time effectively. Lessen the use of multimedia, and gadgets. Be responsible by answering all activities and most importantly think of their dreams.

Table 17. ***The themes that emerged from the shared experiences***

Themes	Statement of PC
Recommended	**GC 4:** I recommend that this Intervention Measure material must be developed in order to be used by the school and would be a great help to schools with no Guidance Counselor.
	GC 5: Yes, I highly recommend Intervention Measure material to track the condition and situation of the counselee assigned to me.
	GC 2: It would be very helpful if there was Intervention Measure material in addition to the subjects that were available.
Provide assistance to academic and psychological needs of the students.	**GC 1:** Having Intervention Measure material is important as it is the teachers' job to provide assistance to the needs of the students not just in academics but also psychological and behavioral management needs.
	GC 3: This is very important to give your program that will equip learners with vital life skills.
	GC 2: Intervention Measure is a learning process that aids students in developing individual and appropriate moral decisions by assisting them in identifying all elements of who they are, making choices, and developing positive and harmonious relationships with their surroundings.
Additional Suggestion	**GC 1:** Be creative, comprehensive and provide opportunities for the students to have fun while learning.
	GC 2: My suggestions are to include the parents or guardians in Intervention Measure evaluations, set up an online appointment, and eventually include it into the curriculum.
	GC 3: Resources are available and just add creativity. Any self-learning material that can provide a positive attitude and improve behavior and values.

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Volume: 11| Issue: 3| March 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

Table 18. Mixed-Method Phase Result

Variables	Quantitative Results	Qualitative Results	Data Integration	Merging Information
Motivation	Composite Weighted Mean: 3.73 (Applied to me very much or most of the time)	Students expressed the need for open communication and creative online activities to sustain motivation.	Merging-Converging	Motivation is moderately high, but sustaining it requires engaging activities and open communication to maintain students' interest and drive.
Study Habits	Composite Weighted Mean: 4.05 (Applied to me very much or most of the time)	Time management and prioritization were emphasized as key strategies for effective study habits.	Merging-Converging	Study habits are well-developed but can be further enhanced by teaching time management strategies and reducing distractions.
Mental Health	Composite Weighted Mean: 3.57 (Applied to me very much or most of the time)	Students reported anxiety, depression, and the need for mental health support through counseling and seminars.	Merging-Connecting	Mental health is a significant concern, requiring targeted interventions such as counseling, virtual seminars, and stress management strategies to support students' well-being.
Parental Support	Composite Weighted Mean: 3.77 (Applied to me very much or most of the time)	Parents' involvement in students' learning was seen as crucial, but some lacked technical knowledge.	Merging-Explaining	Parental support is essential for students' success, but parents need guidance on how to effectively assist their children in an online learning environment.
Home Learning Environment	Composite Weighted Mean: 3.37 (Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of the time)	Students emphasized the need for a quiet, comfortable, and distraction-free study space.	Merging-Converging	A conducive home learning environment is necessary for effective learning, and efforts should be made to create quiet, comfortable, and distraction-free spaces for students.
Community Quarantine	Composite Weighted Mean: 3.91 (Applied to me very much or most of the time)	Students reported challenges in adapting to quarantine but also highlighted resilience and adaptability.	Merging-Explaining	Community quarantine posed challenges, but students demonstrated resilience. Support systems and strategies to manage stress and maintain focus are essential during such disruptions.
Communication	-	Open communication with teachers and counselors was emphasized as a key factor in addressing students' needs.	Merging-Connecting	Open communication is vital for addressing students' concerns and fostering a supportive learning environment.
Time Management	-	Students emphasized the importance of setting goals, prioritizing tasks, and avoiding distractions.	Merging-Connecting	Time management is essential for academic success, and students need guidance on setting goals, prioritizing tasks, and managing distractions effectively.

Motivation plays a crucial role in online distance learning, as it directly impacts students' engagement and academic performance. The quantitative results revealed a moderately high level of motivation among students, with a composite weighted mean of 3.73. However, qualitative data highlighted the need for engaging and interactive activities to sustain this motivation. Students expressed that open communication with teachers and creative online activities, such as collaborative tools, are essential to maintaining their interest. This finding aligns with Dunn and Kennedy (2020), who emphasized that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are critical for sustaining engagement in online learning environments.

Study Habits of freshmen students were found to be well-developed, with a composite weighted mean of 4.05, indicating that students applied effective study habits most of the time. Qualitative data further emphasized the importance of time management and task prioritization in maintaining these habits. Students highlighted the need to balance academic and personal responsibilities by setting goals and avoiding distractions. This is consistent with the findings of Alberto et al. (2021), who noted that self-regulated learning strategies, such as time management and metacognition, are essential for academic success in online learning.

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Volume: 11| Issue: 3| March 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

Mental Health emerged as a significant concern, with a composite weighted mean of 3.57, indicating moderate mental health stability. Qualitative data revealed that students experienced anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion, necessitating targeted interventions such as counseling and virtual seminars. These findings are supported by Acero et al. (2022), who reported that the pandemic exacerbated mental health challenges among students, highlighting the need for mental health support systems to promote resilience and well-being.

Parental Support was moderately high, with a composite weighted mean of 3.77. However, qualitative data revealed gaps in parents' technical knowledge and involvement in their children's online learning. Students emphasized the importance of parental guidance in creating a conducive learning environment and providing emotional and financial support. Agaton and Cueto (2021) similarly found that parental involvement is crucial for students' success in online learning, but parents often face challenges in adapting to the demands of digital education.

Home Learning Environment was moderately conducive, with a composite weighted mean of 3.37. Students highlighted the need for quiet, comfortable, and distraction-free study spaces to enhance their learning experience. Qualitative data emphasized the importance of minimizing distractions and creating a supportive atmosphere at home. This finding aligns with Cayubit (2022), who noted that a conducive learning environment significantly impacts students'academic motivation and engagement.

Community Quarantine posed challenges for students, but they demonstrated resilience and adaptability, as reflected in a composite weighted mean of 3.91. Qualitative data revealed that students struggled with stress and maintaining focus but managed to adapt through supportive coping mechanisms. Firmante (2022) highlighted similar findings, noting that students' resilience and adaptability are critical in overcoming the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Communication with teachers and counselors was identified as a key factor in addressing students' academic and mental health concerns. Qualitative data emphasized the importance of creating a safe space for students to express their concerns and receive timely feedback. This finding is consistent with Pena et al. (2021), who reported that strong interpersonal connections between students and teachers enhance emotional well-being and academic performance.

Time Management was highlighted as an essential skill for balancing academic and personal responsibilities. Qualitative data revealed that students relied on setting goals, prioritizing tasks, and avoiding distractions to manage their time effectively. Alberto et al. (2021) similarly emphasized the importance of self-regulated learning strategies, including time management, in achieving academic success in online learning environments.

4. CONCLUSION

The following conclusions are drawn from the findings of the study:

1. The personal-related factors affected freshmen students in terms of motivation, Study Habit, and Mental health during the new normal learning.
2. The environmental-related factors affected freshmen students in terms of Parental Support, Home Learning Environment, and Community Quarantine Status Level during new normal learning.
3. The personal related-factors in terms of Motivation, Study Habits, and Mental Health of the freshmen students have significant relationship in the environmental-related factors in terms of Parental Support, Home Learning Environment, Community Quarantine Status Level. As the Personal-related factors of the freshmen students increased their environmental-related factor they had experienced achieving academic learning during new normal learning also increases.
4. Problems in online distancing learning were encountered by the freshmen students.
5. The content for the intervention measure was developed so that may teach stress management by making use of the module that the proponent developed.
6. Guidance counselors stated that intervention measure standards included in the intervention measure may assist teachers and kids. Most responders applauded OBTLP for tracking students' progress and providing useful measures for academic and personal growth.

5. RECOMMENDATION

1. May provide a conducive home environment for learning, which can further impact the student's overall development.
2. May initiate programs that can improve effective engagement, which will strengthen school-parent communication.
3. May educators place a premium on this factor as this amplifies the students' determination and self-esteem during online learning.
4. May conduct mental health awareness programs targeting educators, parents, and students to improve the community's attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors toward this factor in order to provide a mentally healthy school environment.
5. May assess the congruity and consistency of the result.
6. May implement an on-site/virtual seminar or an outreach program regarding guidance and mental health to educational institutions.
7. May implement an interactive online website or hotline specifically designated for student-counselor sessions and transactions among educational institutions.
8. May Educational institutions propose to the development of self-learning material designed to cover topics related to up-to-date information regarding student counseling that is feasible and inclusive.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my thesis advisor for their unwavering support, expertise, and guidance, which were instrumental in the completion of this research. I am also deeply thankful to the university leadership and academic community for

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 3| March 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

providing the opportunity, encouragement, and resources necessary to conduct this study. My sincere appreciation goes to the validators whose valuable feedback and insights significantly shaped the research and strengthened this thesis. Lastly, I am profoundly grateful to the study participants for their time and willingness to share their experiences, which were essential to the success of this work.
This publication is based on my thesis completed in 2023, which has been updated and revised to reflect recent developments and ensure its continued relevance to the field.

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