

# Looking Through The Lens Of Students: Instructional Shift To Modular Distance Learning Modality Amidst the New Normal

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**Abstract** - When the face-to-face engagement was suspended due to the Coronavirus Disease-19 (COVID-19) pandemic, it paved the way for the utilization of flexible learning in higher education and one of its forms is modular distance learning modality. The key purpose of this study is to discover the challenges and the coping mechanisms of the students of West Visayas State University-Himamaylan City Campus in the modular distance learning modality as well as to develop possible curriculum enhancement plan. These challenges and coping mechanisms were gathered through the qualitative-phenomenological approach by conducting in-depth interviews with the nine participants who were selected using purposive sampling, specifically the criterion sampling method. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The main challenges that emerged were the struggles to understand the modules, complications in managing time, obstacles in retrieving and submitting modules, enduring uncomfortable places to learn, and lacking the technology to support new normal education. To cope with the said challenges, the students are motivating themselves to survive, learning collaboratively, setting up schedules to manage time effectively, taking a break after stressful days, and likewise praying to conquer difficulties. Considering the result of the study, it is recommended for the university to review its learning continuity plan. The CHED may increase the number of beneficiaries for the TES to address the financial aspects of the students for them to focus with their studies. Thus, curriculum enhancement plan was developed to address the challenges and improve the learning experiences of the students.

**Keywords:** modular distance learning modality, challenges, coping mechanisms, new normal, COVID-19

## INTRODUCTION

Educational systems around the world are trying to fight the Coronavirus Disease-19 (COVID-19). Based on the data of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, (2020), about 102 countries have closed all schools, colleges and universities, shifted to distance learning to contain the spread of the virus [1]. According to United Nations Educational Scientific, and Cultural Organization (2020),

more than 1 billion learners were affected by the pandemic, which led to the modification of every countries teaching-learning system [2].

To respond to the needs of 3.5 million tertiary level students, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines, both public and private, adjusted to the situation by implementing policies for the continuity of education (CHED, 2020) [3]. CHED Chairperson Prospero De Vera qualified the idea on the use of

flexible learning, which he believed more embracing than online learning because it could provide learning interventions that could address the learners' unique needs in terms of process, place, and products of learning (Parrocha, 2020) [4].

Big universities like West Visayas State University-Main Campus in La Paz, Iloilo City accepted the call for flexible learning by providing learning resources packets or educational tablets to all students; but this is not the case for a small university campus like West Visayas State University Himamaylan City Campus which became its regular campus last 2018. Despite the situation, it pushes its limits to provide quality education to its students by considering health and safety as the utmost priority without sacrificing its tradition of excellence by providing learning modules.

This study aimed to find out the challenges experienced by the students and their coping mechanisms on the implementation of modular distance learning by looking through their lens. This study is instrumental for CHED, university, school administrators, teachers, and future researchers in understanding the students' experiences and how they deal with the situation to achieve quality education through modular distance learning despite the emergent situation. Additionally, by using the findings gathered through this study, the researcher developed a curriculum enhancement plan in response to students and teachers' needs to enhance their competence and skills in shifting to new normal education.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The researcher aimed to determine the challenges and coping mechanisms of the students in the use of modular distance learning modality by looking through their lens.

Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges that students have experienced in the modular distance learning modality?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of the students to overcome challenges

in the modular distance learning modality?

3. What curriculum enhancement plan can be developed based on the findings of the study?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Design

Given the formulated problems, considering the nature and its purpose, it employed a qualitative – phenomenological approach in research. This method was the most applicable to discover or find out the students' challenges and coping mechanisms using modular distance learning modality amidst the pandemic.

The qualitative approach to a problem attempts to examine, understand, and describe the phenomenon on the challenges and coping mechanisms of students of West Visayas State University Himamaylan City Campus. The use of phenomenological design attempts to set aside biases and preconceived assumptions about human perceptions, experiences, emotions, reactions to a particular situation (Giorgi, 2012) [5].

Through qualitative research, the researcher analyzed inductively, recursively, and interactively the situation they were in and present a picture of their lives in more appropriate terms and in the context that only they best described (Creswell, 2007) [6].

### Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were the nine (9) students of West Visayas State University Himamaylan City Campus who were officially enrolled during the first semester of the academic year 2020 – 2021.

Creswell (2007) recommended using three (3) to ten (10) participants who would undergo in-depth interviews lasting about two hours.

In order to protect their identities and ensure confidentiality, the participants were assigned pseudonyms. These were the names used all throughout the paper to refer to the participants.

## Sampling Procedure

This study utilized purposive sampling in selecting the participants. The purposive sampling technique is a non-random technique wherein the researcher selected participants who have experienced the phenomenon being investigated and can discuss their experiences about the situation (Creswell, 2007) [6].

Specifically, this study utilized the criterion sampling method wherein only the participants who have met the research criteria involved in the study. The following criteria were used in selecting the participants: 1. The participants are students who utilized modular distance learning modality whether in printed or digital forms; 2. The participants should be officially enrolled since the First Semester of the academic year 2020-2021 and not dropped out of the university; 3. Participants who live in far-flung areas or over 5 kilometers from the town or city proper. 4. The participants are the students who have personally claimed to have experienced difficulty in modular distance learning modality (distance, lack of gadgets for communication, signal, part-time job, etc.), which was determined by the teacher-advisers of the students.

## Research Instrument

An interview guide developed by the researcher was used to gather extensive information about the challenges and coping mechanisms of the students in the use of modular distance learning modality. Although the researcher prepared sets of open-ended questions, the researcher asked the participants follow-up questions and not solely rely on the questionnaire. An interview protocol also guided the researcher to ensure openness and trust among the participants.

A formal structured interview was conducted by the researcher for each of the participants. Participant's interviews were approximately lasted for 60 minutes each. The interview was conducted to the participants' residence wherein the researcher traveled personally to their place to see their situation first hand.

Franken and Wallen (2003) suggested that interviewing is an important way to check the

accuracy of the research data [7]. The interview can be conducted in different ways, such as with prepared questions, an interview guide or protocol, or an unplanned event.

## Validity of the Instrument

The open-ended questions used for an in-depth interview undergone face and content validity by soliciting the experts' advice in the field of research. After validating the instrument, the researcher revised it and returned to the adviser and rechecked whether the corrections and suggestions were incorporated and followed.

## Reliability of the Results

In this study, the reliability of the results were established using a good quality of records through taking notes, an audio recorder and a video recorder to capture the details of the in-depth interview. The recorded responses from the participants were then transcribed to see the nuances of the responses. The stability of the responses were the basis of its reliability.

Additionally, to ensure the reliability of the results of the study, several procedural methods were used. One of these methods is the triangulation of data to find out meaningful results. Creswell (2007) stated that triangulation is a process by which pieces of evidence from different sources are put together to shed light on a theme, leading to better interpretation or analysis of the situation [6]. Oliver-Hoyo and Allen (2006) noted that in qualitative research, collecting data is not the same, but using different sources can help lessen the effects of inadequacies that anyone method has [8]. Triangulation of data in this study was done by comparing themes drawn from interviews, observations, and note fields.

Other methods employed to increase the reliability of the study was member checks. Creswell (2007) has stated that member checking is a process by which the researcher collects and analyzes the data, draws the themes and conclusions from the data, and gives these findings for review by participants to ensure credibility and accuracy[6]. In this study, before the researcher used the transcribed interview data, transcriptions of the interview were checked,

reviewed, and approved by the participant. Once the conclusions from the data were drawn, they were presented to the participants for a final review of authenticity.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

Before the conduct of the study, the researcher first complied with the requirements and approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies and the panel committee. A request letter for approval to conduct the study was then sent to the Campus Administrator of West Visayas State University Himamaylan City Campus. The approved letter from the Campus Administrator was then attached to the individual letters sent to each and every participant to impose plausibility of the research conduct.

The researcher conducted a face-to-face interview wherein the researcher traveled personally to their place and their available time was considered so that they will be interviewed in-depth to gather extensive information about the phenomenon under investigation.

The questions asked to the participants were based on the flow of the study, guided by the set of questions, the researcher himself was the one who asked the questions to the participants. During the interview, the researcher asked focusing but not leading questions and listened carefully to the participants.

The researcher ensured that the information gathered through notes, recording, and documentation were treated with the utmost confidentiality. Furthermore, no identity was revealed as part of the research paper.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In gathering the data to discover the challenges and coping mechanisms of the students in the use of modular distance learning modality by looking through their lens, the participants were informed about the study in great detail before asking their consent to take part. The Campus Administrator of West Visayas State University – Himamaylan City Campus was also informed through a request letter and they were assured that the data collected would be handled with anonymity and confidentiality.

### **Treatment of Data and Method of Analyzing Lived Experiences**

The following are the procedures of data analysis:

**In-depth Interview with the Participants.** The researcher conducted a one-on-one interview with the participants of the study using the open-ended questions developed by the researcher himself. The questions pertained to the challenges they have experienced using the modular distance learning modality and how they cope with the situation. In conducting the interview, the researcher used an interview protocol guide and Key Information Interview (KII) guide questionnaire using open-ending questions to uncover information, ideas and experiences. Moreover, the researcher asked the participants follow-up questions and not solely rely on the questionnaire.

**Reflective Insights.** The researcher looked for statements in the interview about challenges and coping mechanisms students have experienced using modular distance learning modality and list their significant statements to construct themes (Creswell, 2007) [6]. After the researcher's interviews have been transcribed and checked, the researcher began the open coding. Field notes compiled during an interview were used as a complementary source of information to facilitate this process. Moreover, the researcher used the Jefferson Transcription Symbol in transcribing the interview of the participants.

**Epoche or Mind Bracketing.** The researcher suspended its predisposition or set aside humanly possible preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to best understand the participants' experiences. The researcher himself, therefore, set aside his personal biases and attachment. In this process, the researcher conducted a brainstorming on the relevant issues and concerns to formulate thematic coding to include in the discussion of results and set aside his perspectives and judgments regarding the participants' experiences and stories.

**Thematic Insights.** The statements were grouped into "meaning units" by describing the experiences' texture – including verbatim examples. The researcher identified the themes based on the responses of the participants. A theme is an abstract unit that brings meaning and



distinctiveness to a present experience and its variant indicators. King (2004) suggested that when searching for themes, the best way to start is with a few predefined codes to guide the researcher in analysis. He also suggested that direct quotes from the participants' statements are important in the final report [9]. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended making a "miscellaneous" theme to momentarily house the codes that do not seem to suit into main themes as it is very important not to leave data or codes [10]. In this study, short quotes were included to guide the understanding of certain points of analysis and establish the prevalence of the themes. More extensive passages of quotation were incorporated to provide readers a sense of the original text.

**Eidetic Insights.** Eidetic insights are being constructed by the researcher through studying the experiences and stories provided by the participants. It is the ultimate learning reflection of the researcher based on the stories attained. In this study, the researcher constructs an overall description of the meaning and essence of the experiences and writes a composite description of the experience.

### **Problem 1: "Challenges that Students have Experienced in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning Modality"**

#### **THEMATIC INSIGHT**

##### **The Crux of the Matter: Struggling to Understand the Module**

As college students who were trying to adapt themselves to modular distance learning modality, it can be seen that some of the participants were struggling to understand their learning modules since there were activities or tasks given but were not discussed in one of its topics, irrelevant topics written in the modules, complicated questions that were difficult to answer though there were examples given, limited examples, hard to follow instructions, topics that required internet access and modules with vague printed texts and pictures. Dangle & Sumaoang (2020) explained that some modules given to the students did not have enough or detailed explanations, which resulted in their failure to understand the materials. Students also

struggle to answer and understand their modules because not every student can work independently with their modules [11]. All participants agreed on this as what they have stated in the interview that:

*"Budlay-budlay. Kay syempre nang self-learning mo, daw something self-learning ang ano subong.=Ti, kung magbasa ka sang module Sir pagkakita mo pa lang ang mga letter daw matyagan mo daw::: daw kasukahon ka."(It's very difficult. Because it is self-learning, this seems to be self-learning now.=So, If I am going to read the modules when I see the letters, it feels like::: I am about to vomit.)*

Moreover, some participants admitted that they found it hard to adjust to self-learning, which was a skill needed in modular distance learning, while others cited the difficulty they had experienced in the absence of More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs) like teachers, parents, or elder siblings who had a piece of advance knowledge on the topics. They had recognized that they were used to a situation where teachers guided and helped them understand the lesson. Since learning is a social process for Vygotsky (1978), these MKOs should serve as the "tagapagdaloy" (channel) or partners that will guide the learning process, not teach the subject matter [12]. This is similar to Gueta & Janer (2021) about the challenges of the students on the use of self-learning modules where students had a very hard time comprehending the modules because of the lack of interactions with peers and teachers [13]. Affirmation showed through their declarations: (P1, P2, P5, P6, P8, & P9)

*"Kay kis-a () ka complicated bala Sir aw, naanad kami ya Sir nga may teacher nga ga-guide bi Sir mo." (Because sometimes () it is complicated, we are used that there are teachers who guide us.)*

Additionally, they resorted to imagining how to do things for the topics requiring applications and laboratory experiments since they did not have equipment at home that they can use. For these reasons, some participants expressed that they could answer very limited ideas to the questions being asked.

### On the Front Burner: Complications in Managing Time Between Priorities

The majority of the participants considered their work and responsibilities at home as a challenge to effectively engage themselves in modular distance learning. This condition leads to their failure to manage time studying the module while performing their important task at home, like doing the household chores, helping with their parents, attending to their business, and taking care of their siblings or relatives. In line with these statements, affirmation from the learner participants show through their statements during interview: (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, & P9)

*“ang time sa pag-answer sang module bala Sir aw kay (.) indi man lang tungod Sir kay ari kami di sa balay maka-direct kami answer sang amon nga module kay tungod Sir olobrahon sa balay indi gid pwede mapabay-an” (the time in answering the module it is because (.) it doesn't mean that we are staying at home, we can directly answer the module since we have work in our house that we just can't neglect.)*

Time management in distance education is an issue for most students, for others are taking a part-time job, while others are helping their parents, and some students lack the competence or skill to do it. On the other hand, participants also agreed that they failed to do their tasks in their studies, like submitting their outputs on time, because of their difficulty balancing their responsibilities for their study and work at home and family.

The study of Gueta & Janer (2021) about the challenges of the students on the use of self-learning modules uncovered that poor time management is one of the issues. Student lack the schedule that made them rush throughout the day. Also, big portion of student's time was for helping their parents in doing household chores and for making their ends meet [13]. According to Mira et al. (2020), if the time management aspect is not taken into serious consideration by the students, it will negatively impact their learning outcomes. Additionally, better time management leads students to better learning outcomes [14].

### A Cold Shoulder: Obstacles in Retrieving and Submitting Modules

Participants also experienced a problem with the retrieval and submission of their modules. They had experienced a delay because of miscommunication, picked up incomplete modules, and had difficulty retrieving modules in the school because of their financial problems, but the worst thing was that their submitted outputs were nowhere to be found after being submitted in the LGU or the school. One participant asserted that: (P2)

*iban gani months pa antis nga makalab-ot sa eskwelahan kay tig a-stock sa sa LGU. So, pagkalab-ot na didto, may ara iban gakadula (.) So kaagi ko nga nadula.” (it would be stocked in the LGU for weeks, even months before they could reached the school. So when it reached the school, some of our modules get lost (.) So, I experienced it myself.)*

### A Place in the Sun: Enduring Uncomfortable Place to Learn

Another challenge that participants needed to endure was perhaps studying in an unconducive learning environment. Having a supportive environment helped students effectively, solve problems, make decisions effectively, and perform better and achieve their goals. In this study, participants claimed that the noises coming from their siblings, neighbors, passing cars, television, and karaoke disrupted their ability to learn. They easily get distracted by these annoying sounds, and they struggled to focus and maintain their motivation. Participants claimed during the interview that: (P1, P4, P6, P7, & P9)

*“budlay kay ti ang sa family nimo, sa environment indi ka mayo maka-acquire mayo sang knowledge especially ang imo palibot gahod” (it's hard because of my family, in the environment I can't acquire the knowledge better especially my surrounding is noisy)*

This is the same to the study of Rotas & Cahapay (2020) where students find their homes as unconducive place to learn as they easily get distracted with the noise in their surroundings [15]. Additionally, One participant also expressed that she did not have a comfortable learning space

since their house was burned down, so she lost interest in studying.

It was shared by Warfield (2016) that the physical environment affects the student's academic progress by as much as 25%. Thus, the environment should be uncrowded and creative to maintain students' positivity in the learning activity. Having a supportive environment also helps students learn happily, solve problems and make decisions effectively and lead them to perform better and achieve their set of goals [16]. Additionally, the study of Vargas et al. (2020) showed that environmental factors such as lighting, noise, furniture, equipment, technologies, and temperature levels at home have a great impact on the academic performance of the student during distance learning [17]. Also, these variables increase the learners' mental workload that causes stress, anxiety, and other effects [17].

### **Bright as Button: Lacking Technology to Support New Normal Education**

It was also found that participants lacked the technology to support their modular distance learning. Participants believed that they could perform better, accomplish things better, and compete with the demands of new normal education if they had technologies that they can use in learning. Participants commented during the interview that: (P1, P5, & P7)

*“makasiling ko Sir nga daw maganahan ko mag-ano, mag::: work sang akon module.”  
(I must say that I will be more motivated to::: work with my modules)*

Some did not have smartphones that they can use to record videos for their performance tasks and check for some updates in the group chat, laptops to ease the accomplishment of their modules, and printers to reproduce their outputs. Participants mentioned that: (P1, P3, P5, & P7)

*“wala gid ko ya sang cellphone bala Sir nga gamiton bala Sir aw para mag-obra sang ano sang video (.) Kag isa pa wala pa ko gamiton nga laptop Sir. (I don't have a smartphone that I can use in shooting videos (.) additionally I don't have a laptop.)*

According to the Cervenanská (2013) it is important to note that technologies are not a

panacea to ensure a good quality of education, but they greatly assist learning in all areas [18]. Additionally Santa Ana Lozada (2021), stated that using technology could enhance students engagement, gain motivation and earn good grades [19].

## **EIDETIC INSIGHT**

### **Struggling to Adapt the New Mode of Instructional Delivery**

In understanding the lived experiences of the students with regards to the challenges they have experienced on the implementation of modular distance learning modality, it appears that students were struggling to adapt the new mode instructional delivery.

As the world occupies with fear due to COVID-19 pandemic, everyone was not prepared including the education system which have been changed abruptly to protect the health and welfare of the students and continue their learning even outside the four corners of the classroom. However, students were not prepared to learn at home by just using their learning modules since they were used in the situation where teachers' guide and discuss the lesson. It can be synthesized that students were struggling with the modular distance learning modality.

### **Problem 2. Coping Mechanisms of the Students to Overcome Challenges in Modular Distance Learning Modality**

## **THEMATIC INSIGHT**

### **Hang in There: Motivating Oneself to Survive**

It shows that all participants were coping by motivating themselves to survive with all the challenges they have experienced. They were reflecting on the sense of why they should keep up and fight, creating self-regulating strategies to maintain motivation, maintain positivity and persistence, propagate their self-confidence and trusting themselves that they could make it despite the situation of new normal education.

This state was supported by the participants (P1, P4, P7 & P9)

*"Kung nabudlayan na ko (0.7) ga-sige ko lang gina-motivate ko lang self ko nga:: kayanon, nga atubangon" (When I am having a hard time (0.7) I keep motivating myself)*

Cahapay et al. (2020) recognized that recipes of motivation why there were students who succeed in distance learning. These are persistence, trust in individual talent, ability and capacity, keeping away from distractions and being passionate about one's goal [15]. Relatedly, the study of Agum et al. (2021) about the coping strategies of Filipino college students about self-learning in the new normal revealed that students were employing a positive adaptation by exhibiting self-motivation and academic independence [20].

### **Recharging Batteries: Taking a Break after Stressful Days**

McHugh (2020) recommends that to succeed in remote learning, students must also relax their expectations. Students must learn to take it a little and fill the gaps later on. He recommended working two to three hours a day and then spends time with the family and other ventures to avoid depression, isolation and stress [21]. Consequently, Pariat et al. (2014) acknowledges that pursuing hobbies and interest help college students cope with academic stress [22]. In this study, it can be drawn that six of the nine participants practice this coping mechanism to overcome the challenges of modular distance learning. They practice various relaxation methods, such as watching movies, talking with friends, wandering around with their friends and family, staying away from the problems, eating, entertaining themselves, and just doing nothing. Below are the verbatim conversation to assert this claim: (P8, P7, P9, & P4)

*"ngita ka time nga:: nang (.) nga:: maghimo bala sang ano nga maano lang ang nga wala labot ang module like galantaw movies, storya sa friends" (I find some time:: to(.): to(.) do things excluding the module like watching movies and chatting with friends)*

### **Hoping Against Hope: Praying to Conquer Difficulties**

CMHA BC and Anxiety Canada (2016) considered prayer an essential spiritual practice of overcoming stress caused by various events, people, or situations [23]. This study shows how participants believe in the power of prayer as their tool in achieving triumphs amid the hardships brought by modular distance learning. Students are praying for courage to sustain them despite all the adversities. Participant also added in the interview that: (P1, P4, P5, P6, P7 & P8)

*"Gapangamuyo para ano, gapangamuyo nga:: matapos ko, gaan ko ano (.) courage nga amo na nga biskan nabudlayan ka na nga ano (.) makaya mo." (Prayer for, prayer that:: I will finish my tasks, I will be given with (.) courage that even though I have a hard time (.), I could still make it.)*

Similarly, the study of Pariat et al. (2014) about the coping strategies of college students revealed that positive coping strategies like mediation and prayer were found to be very helpful in combating academic stress [22].

### **War Against the Clock: Setting Up Schedules to Manage Time Effectively**

Time Management is indeed an essential skill needed to become successful in distance learning. It can be drawn in the study that most of the participants are trying to manage their time effectively to adjust their roles and responsibilities at home and school. Participants managed their time effectively by setting up schedules through their study table, to-do-list and timetable. This statement is justified by the verbatim conversation below: (P2, P8, & P9)

*"May time table (To-do-list) mo, may study table kung san-o mo na i:::- anhon ang modules" (I have time table (To-Do-List), study table when I am going :: to work with my modules)*

In the same way, the result of the study of Barsenas & Bibon (2021) showed that time management through carefully organizing the time when to answer and when to submit the modules was one of the coping mechanisms of the students from an island secondary school in the Philippines [24]. Furthermore, Hensley et.al (2021) mentioned that good time management



represents a second key factor that is instrumental to success of college students and absence may lead to academic difficulties.

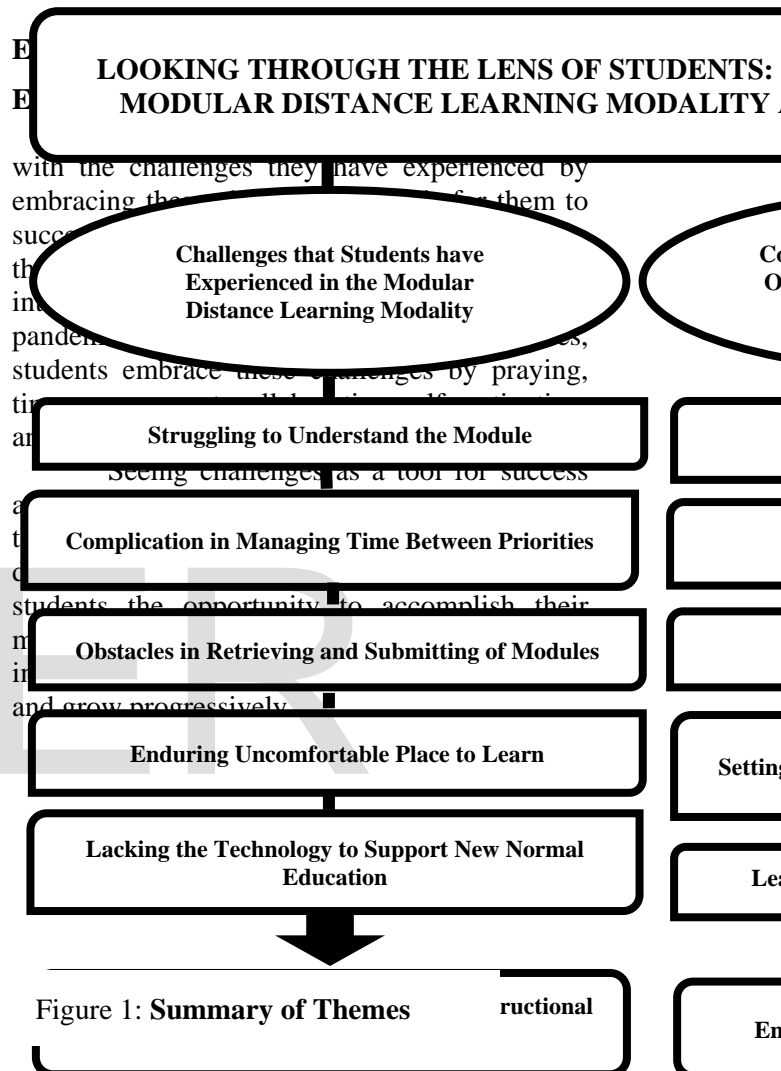
### Building Bridges: Collaborative Learning with Friends and Classmates

Participants considered collaborative learning with their friends and classmates as a tool to better understand the lesson, accomplish their work just in time, and make learning with modules less difficult. They are communicating with their friends using the technology available to them. The use of technology like WhatsApp in this difficult time of COVID-19 can enhance collaboration in learning, thus increasing their motivation, according to Susilawati et al. (2020) [26]. The recorded conversation confirms this claim. (P3, P4, P5, P6, & P9)

*"Kis-a gapamangkotanay na lang kami sa messenger. Ga-ask kami sa isa kag isa kung ano na-gets mo ni." (Sometimes, we ask each other in Messenger. We ask each other if what you have understood in this one.)*

Furthermore, Gates (2018) explained that the attractive feature of collaborative learning is its flexibility, wherein students create a group and

support each other without losing sight of individuality. Additionally, they increase each other's understanding of the complex topic, promote interaction and responsibility [27].



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Findings on the challenges that students had experienced with the use of modular distance learning modality included struggling to understand the module, troubles in connecting to the internet, complications in managing time between priorities, obstacles in retrieving and submitting modules, enduring uncomfortable place to learn, and lacking of technology to support new normal education.

It emerged that the students' coping mechanisms constituted motivating themselves to survive, taking a break after stressful days, praying to conquer difficulties, setting up schedules to manage time effectively, and learning collaboratively with friends and classmates. These were the set of strategies used by the participants to overcome the challenges of modular distance learning modality.

In the light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) may consider the result of the study as a tool for the crafting of policy and programs to ensure that all students get an equal and equitable education amidst the pandemic. The agency could further enhance and extend its Tertiary Education Scholarship (TES) Program by increasing the number of scholars, increasing their monetary support, focusing attention to poor students living in far-flung communities.

CHED may consider working with Mobile Network Operators for free online access to key educational websites, portals, platforms, and applications like Google Scholars, that provide relevant researches and literature that students could use in their distance learning.

Since it is difficult for the students to learn in the unconducive learning environment and are affected by a heavy dose of stress and anxiety, the university may establish referral mechanisms and psychosocial support services, for example, through helplines. The university may ensure that modules provided for students support social and emotional learning activities. The university needs to review its learning continuity plan and redirect more of its budget to improve the students' learning experience to overcome challenges in the modular distance learning modality.

It is recommended that university leaders determine and support students' new learning methods in distance learning modality and help teachers build their teaching capacity in this new normal. It is important for university leaders to monitor students' mental health and well-being continually and provide support and change strategies when needed.

The university may also monitor the effectiveness of distance learning modalities and learning progress. It is an important tool in order to determine and improve the effectiveness of the modular distance learning modality.

For students struggling with finances and finding it hard to get their modules and pass their outputs in the school, the university could tap the LGU or Barangay by asking their assistance to provide free service vehicles to the students at a specific time and day. In this way, the retrieving of modules will be more convenient and less stressful for the students. Additionally, fewer problems will be encountered since students get their modules and submit their outputs personally to the school.

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