

Collective Experiences and Perceptions of Senior High School Students in Blended Learning

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Abstract

This phenomenological research aimed to explore the collective experiences and perceptions on their preparedness for college of selected Senior High School students under the Academic Strands HUMSS, GAS, STEM, and ABM of Leyte National High School, Tacloban City, Philippines. This study seeks to explore students' perceptions on whether or not the blended learning helped them to prepare for higher education, the activities in SHS that they engaged themselves with, and their perceptions of their preparedness for college. A criterion sampling method was used for the selection of participants, an interview guide was used in a one-on-one online interview, and the data gathered was carefully analyzed through thematic analysis. The study found that the common factors that negatively affect the learning experiences of the students in blended learning are: home conditions, internet connectivity, and inadequate teacher intervention. The findings also illustrate that the advantages that students get in this learning modality are: developing technical life skills, boosting self-reliance, and improving students' ability to use technological devices and educational software for their successful learning. Subsequently, students use different coping mechanisms to survive their SHS year, among the coping mechanisms employed by the students, the most effective were: embracing independent learning, using the internet, and seeking assistance from their teachers, family, and friends.

Keywords: blended learning; preparedness; perception; learning experiences; coping mechanisms

1. Introduction

Education is taken importantly over time; it is one-way individuals receive fulfillment in their personal and professional development. Education is a continuous process as it supports the development of individuals' personalities and skills, thus, it does not take in a single time only and individuals in education must go through processes and levels to attain full progress. With this, the Philippines strives for attaining the universal standard in education by implementing the K to 12 Curriculum that covers kindergarten and gives additional 2 years in Basic Education making it 12 years in total from 4 years in Primary Education (Grades 1 to 6) to 6 years in Secondary Education which can be classified into two: Junior High School from Grade 7 to Grade 10 and the Senior High School comprising Grades 11 and 12. Students in secondary education are free to choose among the specializations offered by this program which are divided into three different tracks: Academic track, Technical-Vocational-Livelihood, and Sports and Arts where the Academic track is composed of different strands: Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS); Accountancy and Business

Management (ABM); Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and the General Academic Strand (GAS) (Molina, 2021).

According to former President Benigno Aquino III, the K to 12 Curriculum would create opportunities in improving the quality of education in our country. On May 15, 2013, he approved the Republic Act No. 10533, signing into law the K to 12 Program that aims to provide mastery of skills for lifelong learners and prepare them for career opportunities. Profoundly, this purpose was attainable through the means of contextualizing lessons for students as concepts would be explained to them using local cultures with the use of the students' respective mother tongues. (Enderun Colleges, 2022).

Additionally, the K to 12 Program also provides an avenue for the graduates to be prepared for tertiary education. The Department of Education (DepEd) believes that with enough practical applications offered by the new curriculum, it is an advantage for the graduates to venture out into the professional world as they are more equipped to deal with the higher level of learning compared to the previous batches of young adults completing secondary education with the old curriculum (Enderun Colleges, 2022). With that, the College General Education curriculum will even have fewer units as subjects that have been taken up in Basic Education will be removed. With that, the K- 12 program has its purpose also in line with preparing the students for their possible choice in continuing to pursue college after they graduate.

Relevantly, for example in the HUMSS strand where students are taught with the study of human behavior and societal changes, analysis of arts, culture, literature, and politics, they are expected to become socially aware of their environment and to master critical and logical thinking and understanding on dealing with higher-level oriented situations. Generally, Senior High School (SHS) students in Basic Education are expected to be fully equipped with the skills which can help them stand out on a global scale and complete accordingly to international standards (Enderun Colleges, 2022).

It has been 10 years now that this new curriculum of Basic Education has been widely adopted by the educational system of our country but amid its indulgence to strive for the betterment of its system, the curriculum faced a challenge when Coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic affects almost everything that humans are involved too, posing changes on the way how they manage their everyday life. As a safety response to the pandemic, schools, colleges, and universities that have been impacted deeply by this are ordered nationwide closures and since education is an essential right for children must be the priority from the very beginning of any emergency response, the modality of teaching and learning process was shifted from physical learning to blended learning to sustain education (DepEd Order No. 032, 2020). Subsequently, in the 2022 International Day of Education (IDE), Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones in her speech said, "Amid the challenges, we are at the threshold of great education transformation. COVID-19 has compelled us to look again at the broader learning ecosystem beyond the confines of physical classrooms." (Official Gazette, 2022).

In the Philippines, the effects brought about by Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) led the schools to suspend and declare a state of a public health emergency. Specifically, the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) released COVID advisory no. 5, stating the cancellation of classes and school activities, including on-the-job training and internships, from March 9-April 14, 2020. Nonetheless, the continued increase of local transmission cases resulted in the Philippine government extending until the end of April 2020. This also led to CHED's issuance of advisory no. 6 that authorizes higher education institutions (HEIs), who are still using the June-March old school calendar, to immediately end the semester. Whereas,

those schools that are aligned with the August-May new school calendar were given the autonomy to make judgments on the inclusion of flexible learning and other alternative means of teaching and learning delivery, such as Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT); synchronous and asynchronous learning tasks (Alvarez, Jr., 2020).

Similarly, the DepEd issued an educational plan for a pandemic for the School Year 2020-2021 by giving responses to the questions of the public if there will be an opening of classes for this school year and if so, how would the Department be able to do it without compromising the health of the learners and teachers as well. Particularly, Sec. Briones assured that the agency is “ready” to open a new school year – whether through face-to-face classes or other alternative learning delivery modalities wherein without face-to-face classes, lessons will be delivered to students through modular learning (printed and offline); online learning; TV and radio-based instruction; or blended learning which is a combination of two or more modes of learning (Hernando-Malipot, 2021).

Although there are some Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country that are practicing blended learning (e.g., Lim, 2016; Mabuan & Ebron, 2016; Resurreccion, 2018 as cited by Alvarez, Jr., 2020), the use of ERT for almost half of the remaining semester in this critical period of our time created unique issues and concerns of students experiences. As a result, in addition to having access to technical equipment and the internet, it's important to look at the experience of learners who were placed into a remote learning environment too quickly (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

2. Review of Literature and Studies

This chapter reviews studies, articles, books, and other pieces of literature that are deemed relevant to this study. The review of literature on this study focuses on four categories to wit: K to 12 Curriculum; Schools under Pandemic; College Preparedness; and Learning Styles. These four categories are discussed by reviewing different literature and understanding their connection with this study.

K to 12 Curriculum

According to the Official Gazette of the Philippines, Republic Act No. 10533 otherwise known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 was passed into law on May 15, 2013. According to Section 4 of Republic Act No. 10533, the enhanced basic education program encompasses at least one (1) year of kindergarten education, six (6) years of elementary education, and six (6) years of secondary education, in that sequence. Secondary education includes four (4) years of junior high school and two (2) years of senior high school education. Moreover, the DepEd shall adhere to the following standards and principles in developing the enhanced basic education curriculum:

- a) The curriculum shall be learner-centered, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate;
- b) The curriculum shall be relevant, responsive, and research-based;
- c) The curriculum shall be culture-sensitive;
- d) The curriculum shall be contextualized and global;
- e) The curriculum shall use pedagogical approaches that are constructivist, inquiry-based, reflective, collaborative, and integrative;
- f) The curriculum shall adhere to the principles and framework of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) which starts from where the learners are and from what they already knew proceeding from the known to the unknown; instructional materials and capable teachers to implement the MTB-MLE curriculum shall be available;
- g) The curriculum shall use the spiral progression approach to ensure mastery of knowledge and skills

after each level; and

- h) The curriculum shall be flexible enough to enable and allow schools to localize, indigenize and enhance the same based on their respective educational and social contexts. The production and development of locally produced teaching materials shall be encouraged and approval of these materials shall devolve to the regional and division education units.

Moreover, according to the Official Gazette of the Philippines, the K to 12 curriculum has the following salient features:

1. First, strengthening Early Childhood Education (Universal Kindergarten). Every Filipino child now has access to early childhood education through Universal Kindergarten. At 5 years old, children start schooling and are given the means to slowly adjust to formal education. Research shows that children who underwent Kindergarten have better completion rates than those who did not. Children who complete a standards-based Kindergarten program are better prepared, for primary education.
2. Second, Making the Curriculum Relevant to Learners (Contextualization and Enhancement). Examples, activities, songs, poems, stories, and illustrations are based on local culture, history, and reality. This makes the lessons relevant to the learners and easy to understand. Students acquire in-depth knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through continuity and consistency across all levels and subjects.
3. Third, Ensuring Integrated and Seamless Learning (Spiral Progression). Subjects are taught from the simplest concepts to more complicated concepts through grade levels in spiral progression. As early as elementary, students gain knowledge in areas such as Biology, Geometry, Earth Science, Chemistry, and Algebra. This ensures mastery of knowledge and skills after each level. For example, currently, in High School, Biology is taught in the 2nd Year, Chemistry in the 3rd Year, and Physics in the 4th Year. From K to 12, these subjects are connected and integrated from Grades 7 to 10. This same method is used in other Learning Areas like Math.
4. Fourth, Building Proficiency through Language (Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education). Students can learn best through their first language, their Mother Tongue (MT). Twelve (12) MT languages have been introduced for SY 2012-2013: Bahasa Sug, Bikol, Cebuano, Chabacano, Hiligaynon, Iloko, Kapampangan, Maguindanaoan, Meranao, Pangasinense, Tagalog, and Waray. Other local languages will be added in succeeding school years. Aside from the Mother Tongue, English and Filipino are taught as subjects starting in Grade 1, with a focus on oral fluency. From Grades 4 to 6, English and Filipino are gradually introduced as languages of instruction. Both will become the primary languages of instruction in Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS).
5. Fifth, Gearing Up for the Future (Senior High School). Senior High School is two years of specialized upper secondary education; students may choose a specialization based on aptitude, interests, and school capacity. The choice of career track will define the content of the subjects a student will take in Grades 11 and 12. SHS subjects fall under either the Core Curriculum or specific Tracks. Each student in Senior High School can choose among three tracks: Academic; Technical-Vocational-Livelihood; and Sports and Arts. The Academic track includes three strands: Business, Accountancy, Management (BAM); Humanities, Education, Social Sciences (HESS); and Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM). In SY 2012-2013, there are 33 public high schools, public technical-vocational high schools, and higher education institutions (HEIs) that have implemented Grade 11. This is a Research and Design (R&D) program to simulate different aspects of Senior High School in preparation for full nationwide implementation in SY 2016-2017. Modeling programs offered by these schools are based on students' interests, community needs, and their respective capacities.
6. The last salient feature is nurturing the Holistically Developed Filipino (College and Livelihood Readiness, 21st Century Skills). After going through Kindergarten, the enhanced Elementary and

Junior High curriculum, and a specialized Senior High program, every K to 12 graduates will be ready to go into different paths – may it be further education, employment, or entrepreneurship.

Every graduate will be equipped with:

- a) Information, media, and technology skills,
- b) Learning and innovation skills,
- c) Effective communication skills, and
- d) Life and career skill

RA 10533 added two years of Senior High School (SHS) to broaden the goals of high school education for college preparation, vocational and technical career opportunities as well as creative arts, sports, and entrepreneurial employment. It also makes education learner-oriented and responsive to the needs, cognitive and cultural capacity, and the circumstances of learners, schools, and communities through the use of appropriate mediums of teaching and learning, including mother tongue (DepEd Order No.021, S. 2019).

The proponents of the bill are senators Franklin Drilon, Edgardo Angara, Ralph Recto, Sonny Angara. Speaker of the House Feliciano Belmonte, Jr. and Representatives Neptali Gonzales II, Sandy Ocampo and Juan Edgardo (Cerdeña, 2013). This program covers Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education (six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School [SHS]) to provide sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners, and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship. The current curriculum has been enhanced for K to 12 and now gives more focus to allowing mastery of learning. One of the important ways that CHED has updated the curriculum before the full K to 12 implementation is by aligning it with outcomes-based education—the same pedagogy used in K to 12. CHED also came out with guidelines for the revised General Education Curriculum to complement the new subjects that will be taught in senior high. As mentioned by Okabe (2013) the “K to 12” Program is a comprehensive reform of its basic education. It is considered to be one of the most significant educational reforms in the country (DepEd Order No.021, S. 2019).

The keywords of the “K to 12” Program can be summed up as “preparation” for higher education, “eligibility” for entrance to overseas tertiary educational institutes, and lawful “employability”. Furthermore, Adarlo and Jackson (2016) contend that the aims of the K to 12 program are to expand students’ program of learning, improve access to quality education, form individuals, who can contribute to the wider community, and boost the global competitiveness of the Filipino workforce. Under the K to 12 Program, the length of basic education has been expanded. Two more years have been added to the existing four years of secondary education, which will extend basic education to 12 years, and one year of kindergarten has been mandated as part of basic education. The extension of secondary education means that students aged 16 and 17, will now be in Senior High School, and entry into tertiary education will be at age 18 (Okabe, 2013).

According to Republic Act 10533, Senior High School (SHS), as part of the K to 12 Basic Curriculum, was developed in line with the curriculum of the Commission of Higher Education (CHED) – the governing body for college and university education in the Philippines. This ensures that by the time you graduate from Senior High School, you will have the standard knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to go to college. Senior High School “completes” basic education by making sure that the high school graduate is equipped for work, entrepreneurship, or higher education. Senior High School is two years of specialized upper secondary education; students may choose a specialization based on aptitude, interests, and school capacity. The choice of career track will define the content of the subjects a student will take in Grades 11 and 12. Each student in Senior High School can choose among three tracks: Academic; Technical-Vocational-Livelihood; and Sports and Arts. The Academic track includes four strands: Accountancy and Business

Management (ABM); Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS); Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM); and General Academic Strand (GAS).

Schools under Pandemic

In December 2019 the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, was first reported in Wuhan, China. Over the subsequent weeks, the virus and the associated disease, COVID-19, spread internationally, and, on 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic (WHO, 2020). To contain the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the impact of COVID-19, national and subnational governments have implemented a variety of measures (Prem, 2020).

One setting where measures were implemented from a very early stage is the school setting. Schools are environments in which educational services are provided to children with diverse backgrounds, characteristics, abilities, and needs (Krishnarathne et al., 2020). School closures represent a community-based, non-pharmaceutical intervention that has been implemented in response to previous communicable disease outbreaks, notably influenza (Smith, 2020; WHO, 2019). By closing schools, children are prevented from being near each other, teachers, and other staff working in the school environment. This may reduce transmission between individuals (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022).

In response to the spreading of the virus in the Philippines, the Department of Education has adopted Blended learning for the school year 2021-2022 (DepEd Order No.029 s. 2021). DepEd has given schools the liberty to apply blended learning and other modular distance learning, and TV/Radio-based Instruction.

According to Utami (2018), blended learning is the combination of traditional (face-to-face) and online learning so that instruction occurs both in the classroom and online. Blended learning integrates the advantages of online learning with some advantages of face-to-face learning. Through blended learning, the students had prepared for the course in the classroom and it can be more efficient because the students may discuss with their teachers and their friend what they could not do during classroom interaction. In regards to the study by Utami (2018), his study tried to determine the effect of the blended learning model on senior high school students' achievement. The research indicated that students who attended blended learning courses had higher achievement scores than those who attended traditional teaching. The survey results are in line with other researchers who also argued that blended learning is effective for increasing students' performance. Most of those studies also found that blended learning improves the academic achievement averages (Utami, 2018).

Specifically, the findings of Utami (2018) revealed that the blended learning model contributed more to students' achievement than the traditional learning model did. Blended learning can be used as an alternative learning model for teachers to support students' learning achievement.

Since its implementation at the start of the pandemic, many learners have complained in regards to blended learning, in an article written by Baclig (2020). Students have a hard time understanding certain concepts due to the slow internet speed, one of the key features needed for blended learning to happen. This causes students to fall behind and not absorb any of the concepts that are being discussed in online classes. Due to the individual differences of students in their learning through social acculturation, students have developed differing preferences of learning including how they want to learn and which they want to learn (McCombs, 2000 as cited by Gil, Balintong & Domingo, 2019). In blended learning, the students have easy access to a wide range of information on different digital platforms. It categorized the view of blended learning in terms of delivery of access to course materials regardless of time and space. Hence, blended learning encourages self-learning, where students are forced to look for information online independently, rather than just sitting and relying on a lecturer (Digital Marketing Institute, 2018). In addition, it indicates the importance of the value of personal space and convenience in accessing learning resources (Alvarez Jr.,

2020). This flexibility empowers students by allowing them to establish a routine for doing their work, accomplishing it at a self-scheduled time each day (Beckermann et al., 2021). As a result, using eLearning materials increased a student's right to set appropriate learning and goals and take charge of his or her learning, developing a skill that will be transferable across all subjects (Giarla, 2016). Also, it gives them an improvement on technological aspects, for instance, the use of different applications. Blended learning offers a multitude of real-world skills that directly translate into life skills such as research skills and computer literacy (Giarla, 2016).

However, the issues encountered by the modular distance learning approach were communication failures like that instructions or confusion of students on the modules, limited teacher guidance, the student's discourteous approach to teachers, and complaints about not understanding the module, all of which results in misbehavior on students and failure to pass worksheet on time. In a survey conducted by Social Weather Stations (SWS) from November 21 to 25 in 2020, 89% of families say blended learning is harder than face-to-face classes (Mercado, 2021). The response of the participants illustrated that the result of the survey supports their claim. Some of the participant's responses indicate that they experience difficulties in accomplishing their task due to a lack of guidance from their respective teachers. Many teachers have resorted to giving their students videos to watch instead of instructing them themselves. For many students, this teaching style is not effective. Students may struggle to learn on their own and may be unable to ask questions if they are unsure about the material (Kennedy and Newcombe, 2011).

The main challenges that the students have encountered are self-studying, poor internet connection, lack of sleep, and time to answer all the modules due to the great number of activities, distractions, and lack of focus (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020). Moreover, the participants also encountered slow internet connectivity and a poor learning environment. Slow internet connectivity is one of the most recurring difficulties experienced by students, especially those that reside in far-flung areas (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020). According to the new report from Michigan State University's Quello Center slow internet connection can contribute to students falling behind academically. A lack of internet connection isolates students from the buzzing online academic universe, putting them at disadvantage (Souvik, 2021). Furthermore, students expressed concern that blended learning would conflict with their home responsibilities. This disruption is common in blended learning because students are required to participate in household chores. The issue may have an impact on academic performance, as students' involvement in household chores has a negative impact on their academic achievement. (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020). The struggles of the students in the new normal can be summarized into four significant themes: household chores, internet connection, academic overload, and learning alone. Thus, the students' coping mechanisms had three major themes; managing time, taking breaks, and seeking support (Macalisang & Calo, 2021).

College Preparedness

College preparedness generally refers to the ability of Senior High School (SHS) graduates to be admitted to college and succeed without remediation in foundation courses. It focuses on the knowledge and skills essential to successfully pursue college (Baber et al., 2019). Notably, college preparedness in the Philippines is brought on by the introduction of the K-12 Basic Curriculum. This major reform intends to decongest the offering of subjects for students to acquire mastery of skills and competencies required in the 21st century, such as literacy, critical thinking, and technical skills. These skills are hoped to enable senior high school graduates to be prepared for work or tertiary education (Magno & Piosang, 2016).

In 2011, CHED came up with College Readiness Standards (CRT) to lay the competencies that are expected to be developed and mastered by the graduates of the K to 12 Program as essential entry competencies into college. These standards were prudently drafted by the Technical Working Group composed of experts from DepEd, CHED, and representatives from private and public higher education

institutions. It recognizes the learners' needs, characteristics, and possible choices while also considering the learners' community, culture, competencies, and career options (CHED En Banc Resolution No. 298-2011).

Hence, by establishing an effective SHS, the DepEd is ensuring that the learners (1) benefit from an education system suited for the 21st century, (2) are prepared for what they want to be after high school, and (3) are equipped with the knowledge and skills to pursue better lives for themselves, their families, and communities (DepEd, 2016).

The following are benefits that will receive from SHS: On the Job Training (OJT), assessments, applied and specialized subjects that have a direct link to college, and other programs that prepare them for tertiary level of education (DepEd, 2016). Subsequently, there have been various researches in determining college readiness. College readiness is the interplay of the content knowledge, practical skills, and disposition to withstand the unique challenges of tertiary education (Conley, 2007 as cited in Tamayao et al., 2020) making college readiness as a vital construct in determining academic success in post-secondary education.

Curriculum guides were distributed to Senior High School Teachers to use as a tool for teaching instructions based on standards. Senior high school was also given essential training, workshops and seminars to be fully equipped with vital information in molding senior high school students ready for work or to continue higher education. Administrative positions were also guided through the DepEd Memorandum no. 76 series of 2016. DepEd ensured that by the time students graduate from Senior High School, they will have the standard knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to go to college. Such skills include information, media, and technology skills; learning and innovation skills; effective communication skills; and life and career skills (Department of Education, 2016).

Learning Styles

Since the start of the Pandemic, certain educational institutions have adapted Blended Learning as a substitute for traditional learning. According to Quigley (2019) blended learning, also known as hybrid learning, is an educational technique that mixes online instructional materials and opportunities for online participation with traditional classroom methods. In an article by Horn and Staker (2012), they further explained that under Blended learning there are four (4) learning models within the said learning model. These are:

1. **Rotation Model** - Within a single session, pupils alternate between a variety of learning activities. Within the Rotation Model, there are four sub-models under the Rotation model which are:
 - Station Rotation - When prompted by either their teacher or the clock, pupils rotate through all learning activities on the same schedule within a single classroom.
 - Lab Rotation - Rotate to a computer lab for online learning activities instead of staying within the same classroom.
 - Flipped Rotation - Students acquire knowledge outside of school through online video lectures, and class time is then used for "homework," or the classroom is rebuilt such that the teacher is no longer the primary point.
 - Individual Rotation - A teacher or algorithm sets each student's daily schedule which allows students to rotate to some, not all, of the rotation activities based on their unique needs.
2. **Flex Model** is online, students still learn primarily at their school campus. Students in the Flex model benefit from both learning at their own pace online, as well as from direct teacher guidance in their classroom. Because students spend more time learning basic content online, this allows teachers

to spend more of their time helping students in challenging areas or going deeper into content areas a student has mastered. Teachers might facilitate this learning time with small group activities.

3. **A La Carte Model.** Students can pick and choose whatever classes they want to study online to enhance their present course load at their institution. This strategy is particularly widespread in high school, when students can enroll in a course that their school does not already offer, such as an Advanced Placement course or a unique language course.
4. **Enriched Virtual Model** permits students to spend most of their time completing coursework remotely, with in-person learning sessions with their teacher as needed. While online learning is essential to the Enriched Virtual model, it varies from full-time virtual schools in that face-to-face learning is a necessary component of the coursework rather than an elective component.

Moreover, there was a study that is deemed relevant to the preparedness of Senior High School students for entering college education. Marais (2011) as cited in Vecaldo et al. (2020) stated that the student's involvement in co- and extracurricular activities enhance the student's social interaction, leadership, and self-confidence. Smith and Chenoweth (2015) claimed that students who were involved in co-curricular campus organizations acquired leadership traits such as confidence, honesty, optimism, persistence and responsibility, and also relational behaviors than the students who doesn't involve themselves in such activities. The student's participation in an organization influences their preparedness for higher education. The more organization memberships they have, the more prepared the students are in entering higher education. (Vecaldo et al., 2020). Furthermore, Reeves (2008) as cited in Vecaldo et al. (2020) claimed that as students are engaging in school-related activities the more they are being encouraged in their learning positively affects their academic performance leading them to be more prepared for college.

In the study of Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) where they studied the stress and coping strategies of students who were taking distance education at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, results showed that academic workload, high frequency of examinations, financial problems, and family problems were the major causes of stress among the students.

Rogers and Yassin (2003, in Guevarra & Cimanis, 2017) said that it is important for students to develop different coping strategies to encounter and manage stressful conditions. If not handled well, the stressors that originated from financial problems, sleep deprivation, societal activities, and many more can affect a student's ability to perform.

3. Methodology

This chapter encompasses the methods, approaches, and techniques in data gathering. This chapter presents the research design, research locale, participants of the study, data collection method, ethical considerations, research reflexivity, data analysis, and research instruments and validity.

3.1 Research Design

This study used phenomenological research design since it aimed to explore and discuss the lived experiences of selected Senior high school students of Leyte National High School. Furthermore, this study focuses on the perceptions of the SHS students regarding their preparedness for tertiary education in today's current educational setup where flexible learning is employed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

As defined by Pathak (2017), a phenomenological research design is a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives, and understanding of a particular phenomenon and is good for in-depth issues and exploration of hidden voices. Neubauer et al. (2019) further added that the goal of phenomenology is to describe the meaning of this experience – both in terms of what was experienced and

how it was experienced. By seeking to discuss the lived experience of the SHS students by exploring it from their perceptions, this study will be able to identify the participants' preparedness for higher education.

3.2 Research Locale

This study is conducted at Leyte National High School located at Lino Gonzaga Avenue, Paterno St. Downtown, Tacloban City. The Leyte National High School is a public secondary educational institution in Tacloban City, Leyte that provides both junior high school and senior high school education. They are one of the schools in Tacloban that has a K-12 program offering academic tracks for seniors, which are Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), General Academic Strand (GAS), Accountancy and Business Management (ABM), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and Technical Vocational Livelihood (TVL) track as well, specifically: Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Home Economics. Moreover, it is the largest high school institution in Eastern Visayas that has adapted to the new normal curriculum (blended learning), allowing over 10,000 students easy access to learning materials (Marticio, 2020). Additionally, LNHS is one of the accredited high schools which holds senior high school.

3.3 Sampling

The participants are chosen with the use of criterion sampling. Criterion sampling involves the selection of a sample based on some pre-established criteria. These criteria are of importance to the research in the most significant way (Research Articles, 2021). This sampling was used to assist researchers in studying a specific or narrow criterion and understanding its implications of it. This allowed the researcher to thoroughly examine and emphasize the criteria. Furthermore, this helped researchers in identifying major flaws for improvement.

Below are the criteria that the researchers conform to in choosing the participant of the study:

- a) Bonafide Senior High School student of Leyte National High School.
- b) Grade 12 students who belong to the academic strands HUMSS, STEM, ABM, and GAS and are about to graduate this S.Y. 2021-2022.

3.4 Research Participants

The participant of this study is carefully selected Senior High school students of Leyte National High School. This study selected participants from the academic track because they are the ones looking forward to going to college and are expected in higher education. Unlike technical-vocational, sports, and arts and design tracks allow students to join the workforce immediately upon graduation (Nerval, 2019). Different textbooks suggest different sized samples for phenomenological research, but in reality, a sample of between 6 and 20 individuals is sufficient (Ellis, 2016).

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The following steps are carried out in this study for data collection: (a) A letter of consent was given to the school principal or the Senior High School Department Head, (b) Parent's Consent was given to the parents/guardians of the participants and Informed consent was created and given to the selected participants of the study who fits the criteria set by the researchers in choosing participants, (c) The demographic profile of every participant was asked from them and are examined by the researchers to ensure that this student belongs to LNHS, a matter of proof also that they belong to the criteria set by the researchers in choosing participants, (d) After receiving their approval to willingly participate in this study and finalizing the participants, they were oriented with the process of gathering qualitative data by discussing first the purpose of the research and asking for their available time to administer the data gathering, (e) An interview guide was

created and was used for the data gathering process, (f) The interview guide underwent pilot testing since it is self-constructed to ensure its validity, and (g) When the research instrument is finalized already, one-on-one interviews were conducted with the participants through the use of Google Meet.

The participants, specifically those selected using the pre-established criteria set in this study, are expected to answer the following questions:

1. How did the new learning modality help the Senior High School students be prepared for tertiary education?
2. How do the activities in the SHS help the participants prepare themselves for higher education?
3. What is the participants' perception with regards to their preparedness for tertiary education?

3.6 Data Analysis

This study utilized thematic analysis in analyzing the data that were gathered through the in-depth interview of the carefully selected participants of this study. Braun and Clarke (2006) as cited in Kiger and Varpio (2020) defined thematic analysis as a method used in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. According to Caulfield (2019), this method mainly analyzes qualitative data which is particularly applied to a set of texts such as an interview or transcripts. He further explained that it is an ideal approach in research used in analyzing people's views, opinions, knowledge, experiences, or values from a set of qualitative data. Moreover, according to Mortensen (2021) thematic analysis mainly strives in identifying patterns of themes in the interview data. Thus, such a method will suitably analyze the gathered data from the participants' responses in the in-depth interview that mainly pertains to their perceptions of their preparedness for higher education.

Thematic analysis is suitable and useful especially since this study is mainly interested in the student's perceptions of their preparedness for higher education. Crosley (2021) claims that this method is very helpful in examining subjective information, particularly the participant's experiences, views, and opinions. That is why this method is usually used on analyzing the data that are derived especially from an interview whereas in this study an in-depth interview will be likewise used in gathering the data from the participants. Moreover, the research questions of this study are mainly centered on assessing the subjective perceptions of the participants about their preparedness for higher education thus, thematic analysis is deemed suitable to be utilized as a method in analyzing the gathered data.

3.7 Research Instrument

The instrument that this study used is an interview guide which consists of a series of questions for every research question. The interview guide was utilized in this study because the researchers will gather data from the participants through an in-depth interview.

Subsequently, although human experiences can be investigated through observations, shared interactions, and literature and the arts, it is more typically investigated in the phenomenological research approach by speaking directly with the people in conversational, in-depth interviews (Bliss, 2016). Also, since the interview guide is self-constructed, it underwent pilot testing and validity.

3.8 Pilot-Study

A pilot study was conducted to evaluate and improve the data collection tools' quality and efficiency. The responses were thoroughly examined, and the following issues were identified. There was an interview question under the statement of the problem (SOP) 1 that was removed because it was deemed irrelevant and

the response was redundant. Furthermore, follow-up questions were added under the first interview questions of SOP 2 and SOP 3 to illustrate clarity and ease of understanding with the responses because the researchers noticed that participants in the pilot testing struggled to comprehend the aforementioned two questions.

4. Results and Discussion

In analyzing the data collected the researchers used Thematic analysis because it is the easiest and most commonly used in Qualitative data. And through this, the researchers could summarize all the answers of the participants based on major themes which will be followed by the discussion of the presented results.

Theme 1: Blended Learning: Good or Bad?

The first theme covers the answer of the participant about their perceptions if blended learning is good or bad.

From the data gathered, the participants of the study admitted that blended learning does help them to learn and to be prepared for higher education because they know how to handle situations, they can learn at their own pace, and this new learning modality helps them to access more resources and gave them more time in answering their activities.

P1: *"I think it is the advantage that it gives us na nakakawork kami in our own pace and it gives us more time to learn and to really search more information about certain subjects, certain topic, and then not just limited to what the teacher gives us. And then also, I have improved my skills in using digital sites like canvas or anything."*

However, some of the participants of the study stated that blended learning is not helping them to learn and to be more prepared in entering tertiary education because they encountered problems such as slow internet connectivity, distractions, and lack of guidance from their teachers.

P3: *"Makuri hiya labi na kay we don't have teachers nga magtututdo talaga ha amon so kami na mismo it bahala magbiling hin information. And sometimes makuri hiya kay we don't know kun ano liwat it gnbabasehan hit amon teachers if it amon gnbabasehan amo ba gihap it ira ginbabasehan or dire."*

P3: *"Ako as a panganay I have my own house chores and responsibilities gihapon. Tapos ako manlat bilin didi ha balay upod it akon siblings while it akon both parents na work. So, nadidistract talaga ako danay dire ako nakakaghimo dayon hit akon modules, hit akon activities, kay it akon oras nalalaan ha balay."*

P1: *"Actually po my modality is modular modality so I can't get the responses or the remarks of the teachers regarding my outputs so I'm not sure if I did great or not or what were the items that I got correct and what were the items I got wrong so I wasn't really sure and I was full of doubts kay what if I was really wrong but I did not know it."*

Theme 2: Benefits from Blended Learning

The second theme covers the answer of the participants revolving around the benefits that they gained from blended learning. From the gathered data, some of the participants shared the benefits they

gained from blended learning such as being independent, they learned how to handle pressure and emotion and they were able to answer their activities at their own pace.

P2: *"Yana kasi na blended learning I focus more on studying by myself and I think that quality will help me in college, not just depend on teacher. In this blended learning, one positive thing is that relying more on myself when it comes to studies. I'm ready with stuff like that in college."*

Theme 3: Students' Involvement and Outcomes

The third theme covers the answers of the participants revolving on the students' involvement in the activities in Senior High School and the acquired outcomes of their involvement. From the gathered data, most of the participants are not really active in participating in such school-related activities in Senior High School primarily because they are not really required to participate in such activities during the blended learning modality.

P1: *"During the blended learning I have really not involved myself in any activity conducted by the school, I was focus more on the activities that were given to us by our teachers like the modules. So far, I can't remember anything na gin-join ko unless our teacher required us to participate."*

P5: *"None. 'Yung mga modular mostly hindi naman po renirequire unless portfolio day."*

These participants could not say whether the activities in Senior High School are beneficial or not since they didn't participate in such activities as they are not really required to do so. On the other hand, the other participants had actively participated in different school organization's activities that further gives them desirable experiences and outcomes.

P2: *"In SHS halos wala na.. I do orgs. but not extracurricular activities like competitions. I have organizations right now, I'm part of CMLI."*

P3: *"The organizations: SSG tapos Red Cross. Ha SSG more on income-generating amo kasi it akon committee. Pero aside from that nag e emcee gihapon ako hit iba na events. Both RCYTapos SSG na mga events."*

These participants who are involved with the school organization's activities find their involvement so beneficial, especially in developing their skills and capabilities such as their self-confidence, and interpersonal and communication skills.

P2: *"It made me more comfortable kasi we do daily talks with alumni and it's comforting tapos it made me more prepared in some stuff na parang, kay like diba this pandemic in SHS parang hindi kami nabibigyan ng chance na mag talk so parang hindi nasasanay yung communication skills namin. In which dapat nasasanay talaga sa senior high so because of this organization and in some sort napa-practice ko 'yung communication skills ko with other. And it gives advice, like 'yung mga alumni namin they give advice to us about college."*

P3: *"And pamatungod hini na events na akon na hahandle ha mga organizations, siguro mas na prapactice pa it akon boses tapos nabuligan gihapon ako hini maging confident tapos mas magconnect ha people kay dati kasi awdonon ako tas yana mas naprapactice ko na nga mag speak in front of a crowd tapos bisan damo't tawo dire nagud ak nga duro kinukulba."*

Theme 4: Challenges in Blended Learning

This theme covers the answers provided by the participants to the challenges they face in this new learning modality which is blended learning.

The data gathered shows that most of the participants answered that they are struggling with blended learning. Such distractions include poor internet connectivity, household chores, and responsibilities, and environmental factors.

P1: *"Nahihirapan kami to finish our task kasi some of our classmates are not active in social media, 'yung iba they don't have internet and some hindi nasa Tacloban."*

P2: *"Na di-distract talaga ako danay diri ako nakakaghimo dayon hit akon modules, hit akon activities kay it ak oras nalalaan ha balay."*

P3: *"There's a point na nag a-answer ka very very hard and di ka maka answer then tatawagan ka ng parents mo, ng siblings mo susuguon ka. Pagbalik mo 'ray ka na gana, mag ce-cellphone ka nala"*

P4: *"I see the people here in our house usually use their phones then just watch TV and then parang na va-vibe nala ak, maaaghat nala pok gihap na dapat maging relax"*

P5: *"Nakapanibago. Kasi hindi lang modules ko ang kailangan atupagin mayroon rin po akong kapatid na Grade 4 tinutulungan ko modules niya."*

Furthermore, one respondent stated that some of the information in the modules is difficult to understand and has no definite answers. Moreover, the absence of their classmates has a significant impact on their learning in this blended learning environment.

P1: *"I feel like parang hindi sapat 'yung blended learning. Nahihirapan talaga kami sa lesson like sa modules namin sometimes answer we cannot find solution."*

P2: *"The hardest part in this learning dire an absence han teachers pero absence hit classmates kay iba nga motivation it naihahatahag if you are with them."*

Theme 5: Student's Coping Mechanism

This theme covers the answers of the participants' experiences in blended learning, their coping mechanism in response to the difficulties they face in the new learning modality, and their perception with regards to their preparedness for tertiary education.

From the data gathered, the participants of the study admitted that they don't have a choice but to withstand and accept the challenges of blended learning and find ways to cope with it such as independent learning which they believe will help them prepare for college.

P3: *"To cope up gin iloban ko nala, waray man ako iba na choice kundi ilobon."*

P5: *"If nahihirapan po ako, crinacram ko po or binibilisan ko nalang. Kung ano 'yung kaya ko ma answer, 'yun nalang po kasi may iba pa po akong kinoconsider na gawain po."*

P2: *"Yana kasi na blended learning I focus more on studying by myself and I think that quality will help me in college, not just depend on the teacher."*

P3: *"Waray man nahelp gud na duro ha akon an blended learning ha pagpa ready ha akon for college pero siguro gingamit ko nala an situation para mabaro pero an blended learning dire gud hiya dako nga factor, kanan akon nala nga gamit ko hiya."*

Other participants admitted that aside from learning by themselves, the other ways they do to cope with the challenges in blended learning are to rely on the internet and focus on their modules, and eliminate distractions. The participants also shared that whenever they face difficulties, they ask for assistance from their teachers, family, and friends.

P2: *"Nahihirapan talaga kami sa lessons like sa modules namin sometimes the answers we can't find solutions in it so we really have to rely on the internet",*

"I depend on YouTube, google like kung hindi ko maintindihan yung lessons."

P4: *"para sa mentality ko dapat continue kalang, nagmomodule ka ngani module la, nag ce-cellphone ngani, cellphone lang."*

P2: *"When it comes to research naman, our teacher kasi, Sir is really malalapitan, so we can ask him."*

P4: *"Asking from assistant from your friends o family kapag nahihirapan ako."*

P1: *"I ask my friends from my previous grade levels and then we share our ideas together and also search, 'yun lang po magshare ng ideas ngan hin napapalawak po an amon knowledge ngan amon talaga pag comprehend."*

Discussion

The various themes are illustrated to cover the three Statements of the Problem. Themes one and two answer Statement of the Problem one, and theme three answer Statements of the Problem two, while themes four and five answer Statement of the Problem three.

The responses of the participants illustrated in the first theme show that blended learning has both positive and negative effects on the preparedness for their entry to tertiary education. In blended learning, the students have easy access to a wide range of information on different digital platforms. It categorized the view of blended learning in terms of delivery of access to course materials regardless of time and space. In addition, it indicates the importance of the value of personal space and convenience in accessing learning resources (Alvarez Jr., 2020). Moreover, this (blended learning) helped the students to manage their time as to when and how to accomplish their tasks at their own pace. This simply implies that the students can decide a specific time and date to finish their respective school tasks. Students move through content at the pace that is best for them. This does not mean that there is no due date, but it does mean that students have the flexibility for how long they spend on certain content. This flexibility empowers students by allowing them to establish a routine for doing their work, accomplishing it at a self-scheduled time each day (Beckermann et.al., 2021). As a result, using eLearning materials increased a student's right to set appropriate learning and goals and take charge of his or her learning, developing a skill that will be transferable across all subjects (Giarla, 2016). Also, it gives them an improvement on technological aspects, for instance, the use of different applications.

Blended learning offers a multitude of real-world skills that directly translate into life skills such as research skills and computer literacy (Giarla, 2016).

On the other side, the negative aspects of blended learning are also evident to the learners. In a survey conducted by Social Weather Stations (SWS) from November 21 to 25 in 2020, 89% of families say blended learning is harder than face-to-face classes. The response of the participants illustrated that the result of the survey supports their claim. Some of the participant's responses indicate that they experience difficulties in accomplishing their task due to a lack of guidance from their respective teachers. Many teachers have resorted to giving their students videos to watch instead of instructing them themselves. For many students, this teaching style is not effective. Students may struggle to learn on their own and may be unable to ask questions if they are unsure about the material (Kennedy & Newcombe, 2011). Furthermore, most of the participants find it hard to learn in this new learning modality due to the lack of intervention from teachers. It was also found that the participants find it hard to self-assess their performance due to a lack of appropriate and intermediate feedback from teachers. Participant 1 for instance finds it hard to assess whether her performance is good or not because no feedback is given to them by their teachers. This is supported by the study of Alvarez (2021) wherein it was found that issues encountered towards modular distance learning approach were communication failures like that of instructions or confusion of students on the modules, limited teacher guidance, the student's discourteous approach to teachers, complaints on not understanding the module, and all of which results to misbehavior on students and failure to pass worksheet on time. In contrast, when teachers are physically present, students have the opportunity to ask for guidance and help that they need.

Moreover, the participants also encountered slow internet connectivity and a poor learning environment. Slow internet connectivity is one of the most recurring difficulties experienced by students, especially those that reside in far-flung areas. The poor network is commonly a major problem for developing countries with telecommunication systems and ICT, not being properly developed (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020). According to the new report from Michigan State University's Quello Center slow internet connection can contribute to students falling behind academically. A lack of internet connection isolates students from the buzzing online academic universe, putting them at disadvantage (Souvik, 2021). The poor learning environment is also a problem faced by the students because they find their home as an uncondusive place for learning with the reason of distractions, such as noises, family conflict, and household chores. A poor learning environment makes it difficult for students to participate in blended learning. Furthermore, students expressed concern that blended learning would conflict with their home responsibilities. This disruption is common in blended learning because students are required to participate in household chores. The issue may have an impact on academic performance, as students' involvement in household chores has a negative impact on their academic achievement. (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020).

The response of the participants illustrated in the second theme shows that some participants gained benefits from blended learning by being independent and self-reliant in acquiring information. This means to say that they don't rely too much on their teacher, instead, they rely more on themselves to find out answers to concepts they find hard to understand. It develops the student learning experience by creating opportunities for students to further deepen their understanding through their exploration of topics. Hence, blended learning encourages self-learning, where students are forced to look for information online independently, rather than just sitting and relying on a lecturer (Digital Marketing Institute, 2018).

The statements of Participant 2 and Participant 3 are consistent with the DepEd Memorandum no. 76 series of 2016 as the DepEd ensured that by the time students graduate from Senior High School, they will have the standard knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to go to college. Such skills include information, media, and technology skills; learning and innovation skills; effective communication skills; and life and career skills (Department of Education, 2016). Among the said participants, effective communication

skills are one of the skills that were developed on them upon their involvement in the different activities in Senior High School.

The data gathered from the participants who had been involved in different activities in Senior High School clearly shows that the activities in Senior High School provided opportunities for the students to become prepared for higher education. As the students continuously involve themselves in any activities in Senior High School, it further helps them develop some necessary skills that could mold them to be prepared for higher education. Hence, the enactment of DepEd Memorandum no. 76 series of 2016 is essential as it aimed in making the Senior High School students holistically prepared; equipped with standard knowledge, skills, and competencies as they enter college soon.

From the gathered data, the students who are actively involved in any activities in Senior High School highly benefited from their involvement compared to those who don't involve themselves in such activities. It is evident as certain qualities and skills were further being developed with their engagement in such activities. Their involvement in the activities of the school organizations that they are affiliated with gives them opportunities to develop their self-confidence, and interpersonal and communication skills - skills that are deemed helpful for them to become prepared for their upcoming entrance towards higher education. This is consistent with the article of Marais (2011) as cited in Vecaldo et al. (2020) that the student's involvement in co- and extracurricular activities enhance the student's social interaction, leadership, and self-confidence. Moreover, students' participation in an organization influences their preparedness for higher education. The more organization memberships they have, the more prepared the students are in entering higher education. (Vecaldo et al., 2020). Reeves (2008) as cited in Vecaldo et al. (2020) claims that as students are engaging in school-related activities the more they are being encouraged in their learning positively affects their academic performance leading them to be more prepared for college.

Furthermore, the gathered data is consistent with the article of Smith and Chenoweth (2015) which emphasizes that students who were involved in co-curricular campus organizations acquired leadership traits such as confidence, honesty, optimism, persistence, and responsibility. Also, those students who were involved in co-curricular campus organizations acquire relational behaviors than students who don't involve themselves in such activities. Thus, the student's involvement in the school organization's activities in Senior High School provided them opportunities to realize and develop much-needed traits and skills and be equipped with such essential traits and skills as they are about to enter college life. Indeed, their active involvement in the organization's activities in Senior High School provided them further opportunities to become more prepared in entering higher education soon.

Internet connection, household chores, and academic overload are the challenges faced by the participants in this blended learning. Participants 3 and 5 find it hard to learn due to the responsibilities at home that they need to work on as well given that they are in the blended learning and their learning takes place in their homes. Such is consistent with the study of Calo et al. (2021) where it was identified that the struggles of the students in the new normal can be summarized into four significant themes: household chores, internet connection, academic overload, and learning alone. Additionally, this is supported by Dangle and Sumaoang (2020), the main challenges that the students have encountered are self-studying, poor internet connection, lack of sleep, and time to answer all the modules due to the great number of activities, distractions, and lack of focus.

The participants' responses identified in theme 5 are consistent with the study of Calo et al. (2021) where it was found that students' coping mechanisms had three major themes; managing time, taking breaks, and seeking support. Participant 2 stated that reliance on the internet is needed. Such is a result of the lack of appropriate information on modules that are needed by the students in learning in this blended learning. Participants 1 and 4 coping mechanism is seeking support from friends and families whenever difficulties are

faced. Such coping mechanisms of the participants are important for them to manage stressful conditions and survive blended learning. Rogers and Yassin (2003, in Guevarra & Cimanés, 2017) said that it is important for students to develop different coping strategies to encounter and manage stressful conditions. If not handled well, the stressors that originated from financial problems, sleep deprivation, societal activities, and many more can affect a student's ability to perform.

Furthermore, the participants used multiple strategies to cope with the challenges that they encounter in blended learning; self-reliance, time management, use of the internet, and seeking support. Such is consistent with the study of Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) where it was disclosed that students used multiple strategies to cope with challenges faced in blended learning. Calo et al. (2021) also identified important stress coping strategies which are emotional and instrumental support from family, friends, and lecturers.

Subsequently, the diverse or multiple coping mechanisms of the participants are individualized since they have varying personal experiences and learning conditions. Their coping mechanisms depend on the challenges that they are facing in this blended learning and their need to survive in this kind of modality. This is supported by the Coping Theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) where coping is defined as the conscious and unconscious efforts that a person puts in a situation to solve problems and reduce stress. The theory further posits that coping is highly individualized and dependent on the personality patterns and perceptual experiences of a person. Lazarus and Folkman's model stated that successful coping mechanisms depend on the emotional functions related to the problem.

Limitations of the study

Unfortunately, the General Academic Strand was exempted from the study due to technical difficulties and the unwillingness of the participants. The researchers have approached different class advisors to aid the researchers to find participants fitting the pre-established criteria set by the researchers in choosing participants. The Adviser duly provided the names of the participant and their guardians. Afterward, the researchers contacted the guardians of the respondents to no avail. Calls were turned down and the participants weren't willing to participate in the study. 10 selected students in General Academic Strand (Grade 12) were selected and all of them were unable to respond to us as to whether they are willing to participate. Their range from a slow internet connection, and hectic schedules to total unwillingness to participate in the study. The researchers, in the absence of participants in the General Academic Strand, decided to exclude the abovementioned strand from the study.

5. Summary of Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendation

This chapter presents the summary of findings gathered and the conclusions made based on the conducted interview with selected Senior High School students from Academic strands HUMSS, STEM, ABM, and Gas. Along with that are the recommendations that would benefit the concerned individuals and future researchers.

5.1 Summary of Findings

1. How did the new learning modality help the Senior High School students be prepared for tertiary education?

- Some senior high school students were helped in their learning experiences and preparation for university education by the new learning modality (blended learning), which allowed them to complete activities at their own pace, have easier access to materials, and have more

time to complete their module. Furthermore, it aided in the development of their self-learning experience by allowing students to obtain answers to their questions by searching the internet. Others, on the other hand, argue that it is ineffective because of challenges such as sluggish internet connectivity, distractions, and a lack of support from their teachers.

2. How do the activities in the SHS help the participants prepare themselves for higher education?

- Because students are not forced to participate in such events during the blended learning modality, the majority of participants are not very active in participating in such school-related activities in Senior High School. Other participants, on the other hand, find their involvement in the school organization's activities to be extremely beneficial, particularly in terms of developing skills and capabilities such as self-confidence, interpersonal, and communication skills, which prepare them for their entry into higher education.

3. What is the participants' perception with regards to their preparedness for tertiary education?

- Based on the responses, most participants admitted that they need more time for them to be prepared to enter tertiary education because of the challenges posed by the new learning modality, such as slow internet connectivity, household chores responsibilities, and environmental factors such as home conditions. In addition, it affects their academic achievements because they cannot focus and do not fully acquire knowledge that will help them to ready upon entering college. On the other hand, the participants have shared their coping mechanisms in this new learning modality such as being optimistic, diligent, determined, and inquisitive by asking for assistance from their elders or experts that can help them.

5.2 Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore the collective experiences and perceptions of selected Senior High School students of Leyte National High School and was sought to determine if blended learning would affect their perceptions of their preparedness for tertiary education.

Based on the result and findings of the study, the following conclusions have been made:

1. Some students admitted that blended learning aided their learning and preparation for higher education since it allowed them to answer at their own pace, provided them with more resources, and allowed them more time to answer to their activities. Others claimed that it does not assist them due to issues such as slow internet connectivity, distractions, and a lack of assistance from their teachers.
2. The blended learning enabled participants to work at their own pace when completing activities. Furthermore, it encourages them to browse the internet more to learn a specific concept, and thus the participant's learning experience develops through self-studying.
3. The absence of requiring the Senior High School students to participate in any organizations and activities in Senior High School during the blended learning modality results in lesser encouragement to the students' involvement and eventually missed an opportunity to develop the necessary skills needed to prepare themselves for entering higher education soon. On the other hand, the more the Senior High School students involved themselves in such organizations and activities, the more they are preparing themselves for their entrance into higher education soon.

4. The challenges faced by students in blended learning can be classified into 4 (four) factors: internet connectivity, household chores, responsibilities, and environmental factors like home conditions. These are the common academic challenges encountered by the participants.
5. To cope with the challenges of blended learning, senior high school students use the internet, become self-reliant, and develop in them their time management skills. Likewise, they ask for assistance and support from their teachers, family, and friends.

The study further infers that the majority of the Senior High School students claimed that there is no direct positive impact of blended learning on their preparedness for higher education. This is based on their narratives about their learning experiences and their perceptions about their preparedness for college. However, due to the small sample size used in this study and other factors such as coping mechanisms and academic challenges that may affect students' learning experiences, the findings cannot be generalized.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. **The Students** should be initiative in finding ways that can help them to be comfortable in their learning and put more thought into how they can efficiently manage their time in doing school-related activities to have a good academic performance.
2. **Senior High School Teachers** should broaden their views and understanding in giving instructions and activities considering how blended learning negatively affects the learning of the students. Providing different learning styles and techniques that suit the students for them to easily cope with the shift in education and its impact.
3. **School Administrators** should promote active and engaging school activities both online school activities and physical activities that students could engage in despite the limited face-to-face interactions and in ways that will not compromise the health and safety of students and other school staff.
4. **Future Researchers**, should have more research participants including the senior high school students who have enrolled aside from academic strands like the vocational strand and sports track. They should also expand this study by employing other sampling methods, and research design, and choosing other schools as research locales.

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