

Unveiling the Essence: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Essu-Guiuan Instructors Using Modular Distance Learning as Mode of Instruction: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

This study explores and develops a phenomenological understanding of the lived experiences of instructors using modular distance learning (MDL) as a mode of instruction. It aims to examine their views on MDL, the challenges they encounter, and their coping mechanisms. The study utilized a phenomenological inquiry approach, conducting in-depth interviews with nine selected instructors from ESSU-Guiuan. The collected data underwent thematic analysis to identify key themes and sub-themes. The findings reveal that instructors generally view MDL as a flexible and convenient mode of instruction, offering practical solutions for accessible education, reaching a wider range of learners, and integrating new instructional technologies. However, concerns regarding the quality of education and issues related to academic integrity are raised. Challenges faced by instructors in MDL include developing effective course materials, limited internet connectivity and technological resources, managing heavy workloads, and addressing communication barriers. To cope with these challenges, instructors employ various strategies such as collaboration, time management, engaging in unwinding practices, and maintaining professionalism when dealing with challenging student behavior. The study emphasizes the need to address the quality of education in MDL, promote academic integrity, and support instructors in managing their workload and communication barriers. Recommendations include enhancing training and support for instructors, improving access to technology and internet connectivity, establishing guidelines for academic integrity, fostering collaboration and support among instructors, and implementing effective time management strategies.

Keywords: *Instructors, Modular Distance Learning, Challenges, Coping Mechanism.*

Introduction

Background of the Study

In recent years, the education sector has undergone significant changes due to advancements in technology, particularly in the area of distance learning. Distance learning is a mode of instruction that allows students to access educational materials remotely, without having to be physically present in a traditional classroom. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for distance learning has increased significantly. Institutions of higher learning around the world have been forced to adapt to this new mode of instruction, with modular distance learning (MDL) being one of the most commonly used methods.

Moreover, it is a learning that is essential aspect of education for both students and teachers. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions across various sectors, including education. Tria (2020) notes that educational institutions were forced to postpone face-to-face classes and adopt online and modular classes due to the pandemic. The United Nations (2020) reports that by mid-April 2020, 94% of learners worldwide were affected by school closures, affecting 1.5 billion children and youth across 200 countries. As a result, meeting educational demands and providing academic needs and services to student clientele has become challenging. This disruption has affected over a billion learners worldwide, including over 28 million Filipino learners across all academic levels, who had to stay at home and comply with quarantine measures imposed by the Philippine government (UNESCO, 2020).

The pandemic has drastically altered traditional methods of teaching and learning, and the education sector worldwide has had to make significant changes to ensure access to quality education. institutions in the country has implemented proactive policies to facilitate student learning activities, including modified forms

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of online learning. These forms of online learning may include synchronous, real-time lectures and time-based outcome assessments, or asynchronous, delayed-time activities such as pre-recorded video lectures and time-independent assessments (Oztok et al., 2013).

According to Dr. Marita C. Bernales, Director IV of the Bureau of Learning Delivery of the Department of Education (DepEd), the pandemic has accelerated the adoption of distance learning in the Philippines, which was already in the works prior to the health crisis (Bernales, 2021). The government's stance to continue learning despite the pandemic was further emphasized by the Philippine's Department of Education Secretary, Leonor Briones, who stated that "Education must continue even in times of crisis, whether it may be a calamity, disaster, emergency, quarantine, or even war" (Department of Education, 2020).

To ensure continuity of education amidst the pandemic, the Department of Education (DepEd) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) have adopted and implemented modular distance learning as the flexible model of blended learning. Modular Distance Learning is the use of Modules made by teachers with different tasks and learning activities based on essential learning competencies. The Commission on Higher Education has also advised Higher Education Institutions to continue deploying available flexible learning and other alternative modes of delivery in lieu of on-campus learning (Commission on Higher Education, 2020).

Modular distance learning has been widely adopted in the Philippines, with printed modules being delivered to students, parents or guardians by the teachers or through emails from those students who lived in remote areas and other municipalities. According to the DepEd, learning through printed and digital modules emerged as the most preferred distance learning method of parents with children or students who are enrolled this academic year (Bernardo, 2021). The teacher takes the responsibility of monitoring the progress of the learners, and students can seek assistance via e-mail, telephone, text message/instant messaging among others. Where possible, the teacher shall do home visits to learners needing remediation or assistance (Llego, n.d.).

According to Nardo (2017), modular distance learning has several advantages, such as promoting independent study and developing self-learning skills among students. The author also highlights that this approach provides more choices and self-pacing for students, increased flexibility for teachers, and greater adaptability of instructional materials. However, it also requires greater self-discipline and self-motivation from students and increased preparation time for teachers. Despite these limitations, modular distance learning remains a viable option to facilitate learning during the pandemic and other times of crisis.

While there are several advantages of modular instruction, such as more choice and self-pacing for students and increased flexibility for teachers and staff, it also requires greater self-discipline and self-motivation from students, increased preparation time and lack of concrete rewards for teachers and staff, and greater administrative resources needed to track students and operate multiple modules.

Quinones (2020) defines distance learning as a learning delivery modality where learning takes place between geographically remote teachers and learners. This modality has three types, including Modular Distance Learning (MDL), Online Distance Learning (ODL), and TV/Radio-Based Instruction. In the Philippines, MDL is currently the most popular learning modality used by all public schools and universities. This is in consideration of learners in rural areas where the internet is not accessible for online learning.

Eastern Samar State University (ESSU) Guiuan campus is one of the institutions that have adopted MDL as a mode of instruction. As with any new mode of instruction, the implementation of MDL has its challenges. Instructors have had to adapt to this new way of teaching, and students have had to adjust to a new way of learning. In order to understand the impact of MDL on the teaching and learning experience at ESSU Guiuan, it is important to explore the lived experiences of the instructors.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of ESSU-Guian instructors using Modular Distance Learning as a mode of instruction. The study seeks to provide insights into the views, challenges and coping mechanisms employed with the use of MDL on the teaching of instructors at ESSU Guian.

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

How do instructors view modular distance learning?

What are the challenges experienced with, and coping mechanism employed to address the challenges of ESSU-Guian instructors using MDL as a mode of instruction?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the lived experiences of ESSU-Guian instructors using modular distance learning. Through a phenomenological lens, this research sheds light on the essence of their experiences, informing educational practices and policies, and contributing to the broader discourse on remote instruction.

Chapter Ii

Review of Related Literatures and Studies

Several studies have explored various aspects of modular distance learning. Leask and Younie (2016) focused on the role of blended learning, including modular distance learning, in overcoming barriers to participation in higher education. They investigated how the combination of online and face-to-face learning can enhance access, engagement, and achievement for students in diverse educational settings.

Palalas, Gouseti, and Papadopoulos (2017) conducted a systematic review that examined the role of instructional design and learner characteristics in motivating students in distance education, including modular distance learning. They emphasized the importance of designing modular courses that incorporate engaging and interactive activities to enhance student motivation and satisfaction.

In another case study, Chen and Denoyelles (2013) explored students' reflective thinking in a blended course that included modular distance learning. They examined the impact of online discussions and reflective activities on students' learning experiences and outcomes, highlighting the value of incorporating reflective practices in modular distance learning to promote deep learning and critical thinking skills.

Fominykh and Vasilyeva (2016) implemented and evaluated a modular object-oriented dynamic learning environment (MOODLE) in a distance learning context. Their study focused on the effectiveness of MOODLE as a platform for modular distance learning, particularly its impact on student engagement, interaction, and learning outcomes.

Hernández-Nanclares, Bote-Lorenzo, and Muñoz-Merino (2019) conducted a systematic review that explored the use of learning analytics in modular learning environments, including modular distance learning. They investigated how learning analytics can be utilized to monitor student progress, provide personalized feedback, and support instructional decision-making in modular distance learning contexts.

These studies collectively provide valuable insights into different aspects of modular distance learning, such as its impact on access and participation, instructional design considerations, student motivation and engagement, reflective thinking, learning platform effectiveness, and the use of learning analytics. By examining these findings, researchers and educators can gain a deeper understanding of the benefits, challenges, and best practices associated with modular distance learning.

Chapter III

Methodology

This section of the research paper presents the research design, sampling procedure, the respondents of the study, the data gathering procedures, and ethical considerations carried out in the conduct of this research study.

Research Design

A phenomenological research design was chosen to clearly present the description of the phenomenon under inquiry. Accordingly, it delineates the meaning of lived experiences for several individuals (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, this study utilized the hermeneutical phenomenology because of the interest to the real-life experiences of the instructors using modular distance learning as mode of instruction. Moreover, transcendental phenomenology was the second approach used in this study, in which the researchers identifies a phenomenon to be studied, bracketed the researcher's own experiences, and collected information from several individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. (Moustakas cited in Creswell, 2007)

Respondents of the Study

This study involved the instructors of ESSU Guiuan who have been handling different academic subjects using Modular distance learning as the mode of instruction. The researchers diligently inquire as to who among the target participants have a meaningful and substantial experiences relating to the phenomenon under inquiry. This was done in order to gain extensive and significant data that would substantiate the study.

Sampling Procedures

According to Hycner (1999), “the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participants.” For this reason, the researchers used purposive sampling for the selection of the participants of this study. “Purposive sampling is characterized by the incorporation of specific criteria met by the participants at the moment of selection” (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Furthermore, Creswell (2013) asserted that purposeful sampling is used to select the participants and the site for the study in order to purposefully inform a rich understanding of the primary phenomenon in the study.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researchers prepare a communication letter address to the Campus Administrator. This is requesting for permission to disseminate the conduct an interview to the identified research participants.

Data Collection

The qualitative methods of data collection utilized such as; field observation, in-depth interview and focus group discussion. During field observation, the researchers take notes regarding the behaviors of the participants and other relevant information that concern the subject under inquiry. Moreover, a semi-structured interview was conducted using an open-ended question intended to extract substantial insights from the participants with regard to their experiences of teaching. Each interview was recorded using a digital instrument and transcribed for the purposes of data analysis.

Data Analysis

This study employed Colaizzi's phenomenological method of inquiry. This method is a modification of Giorgi's (1970) approach to phenomenological inquiry incorporating the process of validating the findings – the structure of the phenomenon. In this process, the researchers were obligated to return the explicated

data to the respective participants for review (Edward and Welch, 2015). Any valuable data that may emanate due to review and validation by the participants are of paramount importance for the final explication of findings.

The following steps represents Colaizzi's of phenomenological data analysis (cited in Schuemann, 2014; Shosha, 2012)

Each transcript should be read and re-read in order to obtain a general sense about the whole content.

For each transcript, significant statements that pertain to the phenomenon under study should be extracted. These statements must be recorded on a separate sheet noting their pages and lines numbers.

Meanings should be formulated from these significant statements.

The formulated meanings should be sorted into categories, clusters of themes, and themes.

The findings of the study should be integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study.

The fundamental structure of the phenomenon should be described.

Finally, validation of the findings should be sought from the research participants to compare the researcher's descriptive results with their experiences.

Ethical Consideration

After the purposive selection of the participants, the researchers send a communication letter to the selected faculty members to confirm if they are willing to become informants of this study. Informed consent was profoundly valued especially with regard to individual interviews. Hence, each of them will be highly encouraged to fix their signature on an informed consent form. Moreover, participants are always free to withdraw their approval in any circumstances.

All recorded interviews and information were kept in a safe storage. Confidentiality was strictly observed, henceforth, the researchers only assigned a code representing the respective informants. Furthermore, prior to the final explication of findings, the researchers returned the data to the informants for ultimate review and validation in order to ensure precision and verity of the outcome.

Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

This chapter aims to discuss the themes that were developed throughout the explication and interpretation of the data gathered from in-depth interviews with selected instructors of essu-guiuan. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand, through a phenomenological perspective, the lived experiences of the informants concerning how do instructors view modular learning, challenges and their coping mechanism to such challenges, as well as the rewards they get from the teaching career. To provide a rich account of the qualitative data collected, the findings and discussion sections have been combined.

It should be noted that due to the large amount of data collected, the researcher only selected sections of the data that were judged to be most appropriate and of paramount significance with regard to the objectives of this research. Direct quotes from the transcribed data have been presented so as to substantiate the general findings that emerged from analysis of the data.

Moreover, to present the findings and answer the research questions posited in the first chapter, the discussion has been divided into two (2) main sections derived from the three overall themes that were developed through the process of thematic analysis, namely:

- Instructors view on modular distance learning
- Challenges encountered and coping mechanism employed

Instructors View on Modular Distance Learning

The lived experiences of ESSU-Guiuan instructors using modular distance learning as a mode of instruction were explored to understand how they view this form of distance learning. Based on the interviews conducted, the majority of the instructors viewed MDL as a flexible and convenient way of delivering course content to students. To discuss these views on modular distance learning, it is fitting to tell in (3) sub-existing cluster themes falling under the emergent theme mentioned above. These cluster themes were developed through the explication process, answer the first research question of the study, “*What are the views of instructors on modular distance learning?*”

Perceptions of MDL Effectiveness

Theme 1. Access And Equity on Education

The views expressed by the informants towards modular distance learning as a mode of instruction are steady with previous research findings. In a study conducted by Alghamdi and Malik (2021), instructors reported that the flexibility and convenience of modular distance learning allowed them to create an understanding about the learning of students. Similarly, Puslitbang SDM Kemendikbud (2020) found that instructors viewed modular distance learning as a solution to the challenges of traditional face-to-face instruction, particularly in terms of providing access to education to students in remote areas.

Based on the responses from the informants, instructors have varying views on the use of modular distance learning as a mode of instruction. Informants view modular learning as a practical solution to provide flexible and accessible education.

Key informant 3: “*As instructor... modular learning is a better alternative solution to continue the learning of students at the same time the work of teacher*”

Key informant 4: “*So in my part... my view about modular distance learning kun бага ha pagka yana nga panahon is maupay para han mga my students who don't have gadgets like cellphone, especially hadto han waray acces nga tubay biton internet.*”

[*So in my part... my view about modular distance learning during this time of situation is good for those students who don't have gadgets like cellphone, especially to those who don't have access with good internet.*”]

Key informant 7: “*My view... modular distance learning, also can help students who are financially unstable, especially during this pandemic.*”

Key informant 9: “*Abm... mdl is a valuable tool para ha akon in reaching a wider range of learners...especially those who live in remote or underserved areas... kay it can help to bridge the gap in access to education ngan makahatag hin equitable opportunities for learning*”.

[*Abm... mdl is a valuable tool for me in reaching a wider range of learners...especially those who live in remote or underserved areas... because it can help to bridge the gap in access to education and it can give equitable opportunities for learning.*”]

Key informant 6: “*Okay, modular learning... because during this pandemic we rely so much on this kind of instruction. In fact, we need to remember that it's the duty of every teacher to never stop transmitting new knowledge to our students.*”

Key informant 8: *"Ahm... for me, mdl is good for this pandemic only... face-to-face is much better because our students need to learn hands on activities."*

Moreover, the informants correspondingly saw modular distance learning as an innovative way to provide education that is flexible and accommodating to diverse learners' needs.

Key informant 5: mentioned, *"MDL is an excellent way to reach our learners due to various reasons like work schedules or location. It also allows learners to study at their own pace and convenience."*

Additionally, instructors viewed MDL as an opportunity to expand their teaching skills and adopt new instructional technologies.

Key informant 1: *"As an instructor... my view about MDL offers the flexibility of time and space. I can teach and engage with students anytime and anywhere, basta may cellphone kala na dara hebebe"*

["As an instructor... my view about MDL offers the flexibility of time and space. I can teach and engage with students anytime and anywhere, as long you bring your cellphone hebebe"]

Key informant 2: *"...MDL it allows me to create and share various types of learning materials with my students easily kay it iba ba ira nasing nga, sir! module la ako, sir! ma online la ako."*

[MDL it allows me to create and share various types of learning materials with my students easily because some of them would say, sir! I prefer on module, sir! I prefer online.]

Key informant 8: stated, *"MDL has allowed me to use different multimedia, to explain complex concepts like mag send nala ako ba ira hin videos that can support their learning ngan somehow, it also allows me to reach learners who may have different learning styles."*

["MDL has allowed me to use different multimedia, to explain complex concepts like I will send videos that can support their learning and somehow, it also allows me to reach learners who may have different learning styles."

Informants positive views of modular distance learning can also be attributed to their familiarity with technology. The increasing use of technology in education has led to the emergence of a new type of instructor who has a strong ability to integrate technology into their teaching practices. As noted by Wang and Liaw (2021), instructors who are comfortable with technology are more likely to view modular distance learning as an effective mode of instruction.

Theme 2. Quality of Education

The responses from the key informants shed light in promoting effective learning during the pandemic. Even though informants have positive views that modular learning can give still, they had numerous concerns about the quality of education provided through MDL. The second view of informants They were all have common views that in terms of transferring knowledge or learning to students may don't have an assurance that there is a quality of education provided on them. This preconceived judgement is evidently shared by all of them during the interviews.

Key informant 1: *"There might be a limited learning... because our students don't take seriously in reading the module."*

Key informant 3: *"To be honest sir...in terms biton quality of learning to this manner of teaching... some students are lazy and don't take seriously reading what is in the module... kay iton iba hit a ba ira largo na proceed ba assessments."*

Key informant 7: *"Ahm, truly, it's difficult to say nga we can identify the level of learning of our students, because we can't monitor them all the time. Kay kun bisan nag klaklase hiton online it iba naman di man nakaka attend for may reasons so my behind gud permi."*

Key informant 6: “The truth is... I actually lack in giving feedbacks to answer the queries of my students in terms of the difficulties they have in their learning process, so it’s really hard to say that there’s a quality of education that takes place to students during this pandemic... bisan pag mamata ko hita aga pag a abri ko ak messenger sunod sunod na iton it tingog, hehebe”

These issues can be supported by literature that discusses learning engagement and the importance of students' active participation in the learning process (Fredricks et al., 2004; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Students who are not fully engaged with the module materials may struggle to grasp the content and apply it effectively. Overall, the collective observations of the key informants indicate that various factors contribute to the limited learning experience during the pandemic. These factors include students' lack of seriousness, challenges in monitoring and attendance, and insufficient feedback and support from educators.

Theme 3. Academic Integrity

Following the narratives above concerning the engagement of students learning during this pandemic, another overall theme that transpired through data analysis was concerning on the academic integrity is a pressing for instructors as it undermines the values of honesty, intellectual rigor, and originality in the educational system. Instances of plagiarism, cheating, and other academic misconduct erode the credibility and fairness of the learning environment. These breaches make it thought-provoking for instructors to assess students' abilities accurately and provide constructive feedback, while also requiring them to address integrity violations and cultivate a culture of ethical responsibility among students.

Key informant 7: “Most of the answers of the students on the assessments... are not really from their own idea it iba biton gin copy la tikang han ira classmate nga barkada. Hehe...”

Key informant 4: “I’ve noticed that some students are more prone to cheating or plagiarism in distance learning because they feel isolated or disconnected from their peers and instructors, and it is possible... nga an ira answers are taken from the internet.”

Key informant 3: “Maaram man ako nga iton iba hit ak mga studyante cering pa ma uhap la iton nag o ungod-ungod pag a-answer... Some of them talaga nasubad hit ira classmate kay pag che-cheke ko paprebo ngatan bisan an mali nga spelling. Hehebe”

The informants believe that academic integrity in distance learning resonates with the observations made by the key informants. Copying answers from their classmates aligns with studies indicating the prevalence of cheating and plagiarism in online assessments (Stuber-McEwen et al., 2009). This behavior can be attributed to factors mentioned by key informant 4, such as feelings of isolation and disconnection from peers and instructors, which can make some students more prone to dishonest practices (Dawson et al., 2019).

Moreover, students mimic their classmates' answers, even down to minor spelling mistakes, is consistent with the accessibility of external resources, including the internet, which facilitates plagiarism and replication of answers (Stuber-McEwen et al., 2009). The literature underscores the need to address academic dishonesty in distance learning by promoting a sense of connection, implementing clear guidelines, and educating students on the importance of academic integrity (Stuber-McEwen et al., 2009; Dawson et al., 2019).

Challenges and Coping Mechanism

Another prominent theme that emerged from the data analysis pertained to the challenges faced by ESSU-Guiuan instructors using Modular Distance Learning as a mode of instruction, along with the coping mechanisms employed to address these challenges. This theme was identified based on the significant statements shared by the informants during their narratives. In order to fully understand and explore this theme, it is important to delve into the key phrases that contribute to its development.

Additionally, this part of the study sheds light on the second research question: *"What are the challenges experienced with and coping mechanisms employed to address the challenges of ESSU-Guianan instructors using MDL as a mode of instruction?"*

To facilitate the discussion, the researcher has divided this theme into two distinct parts: the challenges faced by instructors, and the coping mechanisms employed. It is worth noting that each theme encompasses various sub-themes, which have been derived from the lived experiences shared by the key informants.

Challenges of ESSU-Guianan Instructors

Following the narratives above concerning the misimpression of the informants towards the level of stress affiliated to teaching, it is however a barefaced that teaching is one of the professions identified with a high to very high levels of occupational stress.

According to Singh and Kar (2015) stress is influenced by various factors, including personality, environment, sociocultural factors, and contextual factors. Stress can arise from different sources, such as occupational, domestic, and economic factors (Adebola & Mukhtari, 2008; Anyanwu et al, 2015). Occupational stress is caused by a discrepancy between work demands and an individual's ability to meet them (Mahmood, Nudrat & Zahoor 2013).

This qualitative study had determined the different job stressors as revealed by the informants. This was categorized into four (4) cluster theme such as:

- Developing and designing effective module as course materials
- Limited internet connectivity and technological resources,
- Managing heavy workload,
- Addressing communication barriers between instructors and students.

Theme 4. Developing and Designing Effective Course Materials

Creating learning materials or modules for students is an integral part of a teacher's job as it plays a vital role in facilitating effective learning experiences. The development of well-designed and engaging learning materials not only enhances student engagement but also promotes meaningful understanding and retention of the content. According to the literature, instructional design principles are essential in creating effective learning materials. The study by Kaymak and Horzum (2020) emphasizes the importance of aligning learning objectives, content, and assessments to ensure coherence and relevance in the materials. Additionally, Liaw (2008) highlights that well-structured and interactive materials contribute to a positive learning experience. By leveraging these principles, teachers can create learning materials or modules that cater to students' diverse learning needs, promote active participation, and facilitate effective knowledge acquisition and application.

Key informant 3: *"Creating a module was one of the challenges I face, finding the right balance between providing enough content and keeping the modules concise. It's important to present the information in a clear and organized manner without overwhelming the students."*

Key informant 6: *"Creating interactive and engaging modules can be time-consuming and technically challenging, especially for instructors who are not familiar with instructional design software or multimedia tools."*

Key informant 3: *"When I was making a module it was one my challenges as a teacher during this pandemic, especially in my part because I handled subject wherein, there was no available book related to my subject. In short, problema ko talaga. Hehe."*

Key informant 2: *"Keeping the modules up-to-date and relevant is a challenge. The rapidly changing landscape of the subject matter requires continuous revision and updating of the materials to ensure their accuracy and applicability."*

Moreover, adapting the course materials to cater to different learning styles and abilities is a constant challenge for instructors.

Key informant 4: *"Aside la nga makuri mag himo han module, another problem was the institutional format nga kailangan sundon kay nag iiriba usabay an font, Basta! Makuti ko."*

Key informant 7: *"Creating the module as a learning material was a crucial part for me... especially han naabot na han assessment kay usabay di na ak maaram kun ano na nga type of assessment an akon hibimo-on kay makuri man nga papribo nala permi essay type, kay it studyante for sure hububyaon na pag ura ura ka makuri an questions. blangko iton na ipapasa."*

Key informant 1: *It was a challenge for me... kay dapat an module own idea han teacher nga dapat naka stipulated ha module, deri tanan naka pattern han book."*

Key informant 8: *"When I was making my module all the information's I get from the internet even book, I make sure that the author must be cited to avoid plagiarism."*

It is essential for instructors to uphold academic integrity even when creating modules by appropriately citing the authors of the materials they utilize from the internet or books to avoid plagiarism. Citing the original sources not only demonstrates respect for intellectual property but also ensures transparency and accountability in scholarly work. According to the literature, proper citation practices contribute to the credibility and integrity of academic endeavors. A study by Pecorari (2008) emphasizes the importance of acknowledging sources through appropriate citation, which helps establish an ethical foundation for academic writing. By adhering to citation guidelines, instructors uphold the principles of academic integrity, foster a culture of responsible scholarship, and set a positive example for their students.

Theme 5. Limited Internet Connectivity and Technological Resources

Limited internet connectivity and technological resources present significant challenges in the realm of education. Insufficient access to reliable internet connections and necessary devices can hinder students' ability to fully participate in online learning activities and access educational resources. A study by Warschauer (2006) explores the concept of the "digital divide," wherein unequal access to technology creates disparities in educational opportunities. Another study by Crompton (2013) emphasizes the importance of addressing technological inequalities to ensure equitable access to education.

Key informant 1: *"Many of our students come from remote areas with limited access to the internet. It's challenging to deliver online classes effectively when they struggle with poor connectivity or don't have the necessary devices."*

Key informant 5: *"As instructors, we also face difficulties due to unreliable internet connections. It disrupts our ability to conduct live sessions, upload course materials, and provide timely feedback to students."*

Key informant 3: *"The lack of technological resources among both students and teachers hampers the interactive aspects of online learning. It's hard to engage students in discussions or collaborative activities when they don't have access to cameras or microphones."*

Key informant 7: *"It was difficult... kay we have students who live in island, wherein, there is no signal hiton network and it is possible also nga maka access hira hiton internet."*

Key informant 9: *"Some of our students rely so much on printed module, kay it iba mangud ha ira waray mga gadgets like cellphone, bisan pag update ha ira makuri usabay."*

Indeed, this posited a challenge on the part of instructors simply because of economic status and location

where students live in. it was difficult for them to monitor the status of the students.

Theme 6. Managing Heavy Workload

The statements from the informants highlight the significant challenges that instructors face in managing heavy workloads in modular distance learning. These challenges arise from the need for careful planning, the demanding nature of the instructional approach, limited interaction and guidance, and the pressure to meet deadlines while ensuring the quality of learning materials.

Workload is a critical aspect of teachers' professional lives, and excessive workload can have detrimental effects on their well-being and job satisfaction. The literature provides valuable insights into the consequences of overwork and emphasizes the need for effective workload management strategies.

According to a study by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018), high workload levels are associated with increased emotional exhaustion and decreased job satisfaction among teachers. The findings underscore the negative impact of excessive workload on teachers' overall well-being and highlight the need for interventions to alleviate the burden.

Managing a heavy workload requires instructors to dedicate a considerable amount of time and effort to develop comprehensive and engaging modules that align with the learning objectives, as mentioned by informant 3. *"This involves meticulous planning and organization to deliver effective instruction remotely."*

Key Informant 6 emphasizes the overwhelming nature of handling multiple tasks simultaneously. *"Instructors are responsible for various aspects of modular distance learning, such as module development, updates, providing feedback, and supporting students."*

Limited interaction and guidance, as highlighted by key informant 1, present additional challenges for instructors. *"Addressing students' individual queries and concerns in a remote setting requires extra time and effort, contributing to the workload burden."*

Furthermore, informant 5 brings attention to the pressure of meeting deadlines and ensuring the quality of learning materials. *"This pressure can result in increased stress and burnout among instructors... Implementing effective time management strategies and seeking support from colleagues and administrators are crucial in alleviating the negative impact on well-being."*

Key informant 3: *"Deadline... like submission of modules was very stressing to me... I don't want to be a hindrance to my college program."*

Key informant 1: *Checking the assessments or outputs of my students was burden to me... if too much overload of papers that need to be checked.*

Theme 7. Communication Barriers Between Instructors and Students

Effective communication between teachers and students is crucial in the learning process as it promotes understanding, engagement, and a supportive learning environment. Open lines of communication allow for clarification of concepts, addressing of concerns, and the building of relationships that enhance the overall educational experience.

Additionally, a review by Voss and Kunter (2019) highlights the importance of teacher-student communication. Effective communication clarifies expectations, facilitates the understanding of complex ideas, and fosters positive relationships. It creates a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and seeking assistance. The review emphasizes that such communication positively influences student motivation, learning outcomes.

Key informant 4: *"Communication barriers between instructors and students can arise in modular distance learning due to*

the lack of real-time interaction. It's challenging to provide immediate clarification and support when students have questions or face difficulties with the module content."

Key informant 9: *"There is a risk of miscommunication or misunderstanding without face-to-face interaction... Students may find it difficult to express their concerns or seek clarification, which can hinder their learning progress."*

Key informant 8: *"Technological issues and limited access to reliable internet connections can create communication barriers. Students may struggle to connect with instructors, access learning materials, or participate in online discussions, affecting their engagement and ability to seek assistance."*

The challenge of this situation of learning is complicated, not only because the teachers have to adopt the changes of the situation, but also because of the location and unavailability of some technological tools need of instructors for instruction and to much outputs of students that needs to be checked.

Coping Mechanisms

Following the challenges perceived by the informants through their personal experiences in the practice of their profession, the researcher deemed it necessary to explore their coping mechanisms which makes them more resilient in the field. This part answers the next point of inquiry as postulated in the second research question. Based on the thematic analysis of the data, this emergent theme has four (4) cluster themes, namely:

Collaboration and Time Management

Unwinding Practices

Professionalism

Theme 8. Collaboration and Time Management

Seeking support from colleagues and administrators fosters a collaborative and supportive learning environment. By sharing strategies and experiences, informants learn from one another and find effective ways to address the challenges of modular distance learning. Utilizing technology tools and platforms further enhances collaboration, streamlines communication, and facilitates efficient time management.

Key informant 1: *"During the making of module... If I know that instructor had the same subject like mine, we do a collaboration in creating the module to make it easier for us to finish the module before the deadline of submission."*

Key informant 4: *"Okay... I ask some help from older instructor who are more knowledgeable and already handled the subject from previous years, and ask what will be the best assessments for the specific lessons."*

Key informant 6: *"We do the chopping strategy. Like I will be the one to make the chapter 1 to 4, and the remaining chapter will be the other instructor who had the same subject like mine."*

Key informant 9: *"If there's something, I don't know how to use, like google classroom, Edmodo and etc... I ask for technical support to my co-teacher."*

Theme 9. Unwinding Practices

As discussed above, teaching includes a feeling of negative emotional states (Kyriacou, 2001). This was attested by the informants during interviews. All of them conducted that professional teaching is undoubtedly a tough job. However, when asked how they are able to withstand such experiences, they just shared their unwinding practices.

Key informant 1: *"Well, to release those worries I just do... singing just to release those negative thoughts I have in my*

mind.”

Key informant 3: “Relaxation... just like going to the beach during Saturday or eating.”

Key informant 7: “One way of altering stress by which your mind can be set by way of relaxation, you can unwind and you can go somewhere else... to feel free, and then relax...”

Without a doubt, leisure time is considered necessity for teachers. The informant appreciated the essence of relaxation and unwinding. After a tiring day or a long weekend, they always make it a point to go somewhere else or enjoy recreational activities in order to unfurl the anxieties or distress that they entangled upon in their work.

Theme 10. Professionalism

Whenever confronted with misconducts or irritating behavior of their students, instructors should always learn to control their emotions. This is one of the formulated meanings derived from the significant statements conveyed by the informants.

Key informant 2: “Whenever I encounter students who are impolite in messenger it is always necessary to control-emotion-because they are students and I understand the difficulties of situation during this pandemic.”

Key informant 5: “When I... I am encountering such different challenges during this modular instruction, I find myself or I give myself time, a quiet time to reflect and to think what will be the possibilities or the positive outcome might be with... with the consequences that I'll be making or doing and tell to myself that this part and normal in my job.”

Key informant 7: “In my instruction, all I have to do is to relax first, then followed it with problem focus strategy, the... when we say problem focused strategy, try to think of the solution of the problem, to that specific problem.”

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the analysis of the results of the study.

Summary

This study explored and developed a phenomenological understanding on the lived experiences of instructors using modular distance learning as mode of instruction, guided with the research objectives of the study, their views on modular distance learning, challenges and their coping mechanism. Undoubtedly, teachers all over the world are the most important resources in an educational institution. A quality of education depends, to a huge extent, on high quality teachers.

Moreover, this study utilized the phenomenological inquiry, the researchers aimed to discuss the themes that emerged from the data collected through in-depth interviews with 9 selected instructors of ESSU-Guiuan. The study explored the instructors' views on modular distance learning, the challenges they encountered, their coping mechanisms.

To provide a rich account of the qualitative data, the researcher selected sections of the data that were most relevant to the research objectives. Direct quotes from the informants were included to support the general findings that emerged from the data analysis.

The section identified three main themes based on the research questions and the thematic analysis of the data: instructors' views on modular distance learning, challenges faced, and coping mechanisms employed. Each theme was further divided into sub-themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the

instructors' experiences.

Regarding instructors' views on modular distance learning, the majority of the informants viewed it as a flexible and convenient mode of instruction. They saw it as a practical solution to provide accessible education, reach a wider range of learners, and adopt new instructional technologies. However, concerns about the quality of education provided through modular distance learning and issues related to academic integrity were also raised.

The challenges faced by instructors in modular distance learning were categorized into several sub-themes. These challenges included developing and designing effective course materials, limited internet connectivity and technological resources, managing heavy workloads, and addressing communication barriers between instructors and students. These challenges were consistent with previous research findings and had implications for instructors' well-being and job satisfaction.

To cope with these challenges, instructors employed various coping mechanisms. Collaboration and time management were highlighted as important strategies. Collaborating with colleagues and seeking support from administrators helped alleviate the workload and foster a supportive learning environment. Effective time management, along with the use of technology tools, facilitated efficient module development and implementation.

Additionally, the informants shared their unwinding practices, such as engaging in leisure activities or relaxation techniques, to manage stress and maintain their well-being. Demonstrating professionalism and controlling emotions when dealing with challenging student behavior was also highlighted as a coping mechanism.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the positive views of instructors on MDL as a flexible and convenient mode of instruction, while also shedding light on the challenges they face and the coping mechanisms they employ. The study underscores the importance of addressing the quality of education provided through MDL, promoting academic integrity, and supporting instructors in managing their workload and overcoming communication barriers. By understanding the experiences of instructors, policymakers and educators can work towards improving the effectiveness and sustainability of MDL in the context of ESSU-Guiuan.

Recommendations

Based on the results and findings of this study, the following recommendations are drawn.

- Enhance training and support for instructors: Providing professional development programs and training sessions on instructional design, module development, and online teaching strategies can empower instructors to create effective and engaging course materials. It is important to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to design modules that cater to diverse learning needs and promote active participation.
- Improve access to technology and internet connectivity: Addressing the issue of limited internet connectivity and technological resources is crucial to ensure equitable access to education. Efforts should be made to provide students and instructors with reliable internet connections and necessary devices. Collaborations with government bodies, organizations, and stakeholders can help bridge the digital divide and create a conducive learning environment.
- Establish guidelines for academic integrity: To address the issue of academic dishonesty in modular distance learning, clear guidelines and policies should be developed to promote academic integrity. Educating both instructors and students about the importance of ethical responsibility, providing

guidance on proper citation practices, and implementing strategies to detect and prevent plagiarism can help maintain the credibility and fairness of the learning environment.

- Foster collaboration and support among instructors: Encouraging collaboration and creating platforms for instructors to share experiences, strategies, and resources can foster a supportive and collaborative learning environment. Establishing mentorship programs or online communities where instructors can seek advice, share best practices, and provide support to one another can contribute to their professional growth and well-being.

Implement effective time management strategies: Managing heavy workloads is a common challenge faced by instructors in modular distance learning. Providing support in the form of time management strategies, workload distribution, and prioritization techniques can help instructors cope with their workload more effectively. Encouraging them to seek administrative support when needed and promoting a healthy work-life balance can contribute to their overall well-being and job satisfaction.

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