

# Class Mode Flexibility in Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families: A Basis for Ethical Learning Modality for BS Social Work Students

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**Abstract** - This study was administered to determine the preferred mode of learning on the social work Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families. Quantitative-descriptive research design was used in the study. There were 83 BS Social work students from Pangasinan who are currently studying via flexible/blended learning are served as the respondents of this study. The respondents were determined thru stratified random sampling. A validated questionnaire was used as a tool in gathering the data. Average weighted mean, frequency counts, and percentages, were used as statistical tools in analyzing the data gathered. Results found out that BS Social Work students of Pangasinan prefers highly synchronous mode of class for the course Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families. Further, majority of the BS Social Work students perceived that taking the course subject in fully synchronous and for partially synchronous mode will make them earn a passing grade while more are perceiving that taking it in fully synchronous mode will make them fail the course subject. Moreover, the partially synchronous/asynchronous mode of learning ranked first among for being perceived to produce higher level of knowledge on the course subject.

**Keywords** – Flexible Learning, Asynchronous Class, Synchronous Class, Ethical Learning Modality, Social Work Method

## INTRODUCTION

In educational context, online learning readiness is defined as the capability of the students to adapt on new form of learning environment, use internet and other gadgets as the medium for learning and communication, and motivation for self-learning. Since class lessons are delivered via online, therefore it is crucial for learners to be ready and competent in dealing with technology-related problems like poor connections, low-spec gadgets, and adaptation to new mode of submission of outputs (Chung et al., 2020). Communication during the semester is essential for building and sustaining the flexible learning. Communication related to course content for example is necessary just like in traditional face-to-face

education. Learners need to be able to ask questions immediately and to share their ideas and information. Another importance of communication is the support for reinforcing the collaborative learning in the class (Hrastinski, 2008).

Learning through the use of gadgets underlines the importance of information accessibility in online platforms. This is the gap between the students who can access the internet and those who cannot. One of the difficulties on resuming the classes is the economic situations of the family amidst the lockdown due to the COVID-19 outbreak. From the data of the Family Income and Expenditure Survey (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2016), it was shown that 9.77% of the 15.8 million

households with school members in the country have their access in internet. Then the percentage of those with cellphone ownership got 89.22%. Only 0.16% of the bottom 20 percent of income-earning households have paid internet access. Students who are part of the low-earning families are more likely to experience difficulties in utilizing online learning platforms. But in a recent study in conducted in Pangasinan State University (Tabisola, et al, 2021) shows that most students are using cell phones as their main gadget in attending classes and needed to purchase load for cellular data for accessing the internet. In terms of internet connectivity, more than half of the students in both Pangasinan State University have internet connectivity at home.

Adapting to the “new normal” in the educational arena, the Pangasinan State University and Urdaneta City University as the only Universities that offers BS Social Work presents their way of distance learning system based on the advisories from Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and in compliance with the Republic Act 10650 or the Open Learning and Distance Education Act. This distance learning system or flexible learning system was adopted to ensure the quality of learning and teaching amidst the pandemic. Under this learning system, class activities are conducted online and students are no longer required to physically attend a class.

The subject Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families discusses the use of social casework method – the oldest social work method – is under the primary method used by social workers on helping clientele. This method is traditionally done through interpersonal transaction or person-to-person encounter. Using the social casework method requires a variety of skills that lay the foundation of the social workers’ competence in dealing with the client’s psychosocial problems (Chukwu, 2019). Problem in mentor-student engagement during a lecture is a big factor on learning especially on imparting skills or a know-how through lectures. Describing a skill is

a poor substitute for working directly with the student (Baum & McPherson, 2019).

Whether face-to-face to online mode or vice versa, the sudden transition from one mode of class delivery can cause uncertainty requiring both students, families, and teaching workforce to undergo significant adjustment. Flexible learning system requires both synchronous and asynchronous mode of class. Although in most cases, the learning is asynchronous, there is still a lot of time that the student will need to connect on the internet – for downloading resource materials, self-learning, submission of outputs, taking the quiz and exams, and others. For some training topics, it is almost impossible to transition it to distance learning completely. For instance, some training requires practical and hands-on activities (Priscila, 2020). Learners feel online platforms can help them in gaining new ways of absorbing new knowledge that can motivate them to study more (Lopez, 2019). Aside from the challenges on technology for teaching and learning, human element is also critical in mentoring sessions. Human element ensures the student to engage with the lesson and allowing them to deepen their understanding on the subject matter.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study determined the preferred mode of learning on the subject Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families. Specifically, it attained the following objectives: (1) determine the profile variables of BS Social Work Students in terms of sex, age, learning and working status, gadget used during class, internet connection used, and weekly expenses on internet connection, (2) determine the level of synchronous mode of class learning, and (3) determine the perception of the respondents on the effects of various mode of class learning on the subject Social Work Practice in Individuals and Families.

### **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

The quantitative-descriptive research design was used in the study. This study made use of BS Social Work students from

Pangasinan State University and Urdaneta City University which are the only two universities that offer Bachelor of Science in Social Work in Pangasinan. The number of respondents was based on the result using Slovin’s Formula for both University. Survey questionnaire was used in collecting the necessary data. To ensure that validity of the questionnaire, academic social workers teaching Social Work Practice in Individuals and Families served as validators. In analyzing the collected data, statistical tools were used such as frequency counts, percentages, and average weighted mean.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Profile of the Respondents**

Table 1.1. Profile of the Respondents (n=83)

Category	Sub-Category	f	%
Sex	Female	71	85.54
	Male	12	14.46
Age	19 and below	10	12.05
	20 – 21	56	67.47
	22 and above	17	20.48
Main Source of Connection	WiFi/Landline	40	48.19
	Mobile Data	35	42.17
	Both	8	9.64
Gadget Used for Online Class	Laptop/Desktop	10	12.05
	Phone/Tablet	73	87.95
Learning-Working Status	Full-time Student	59	71.08
	Working Student	24	28.92

The BS social work students were dominated by females. The highest representative per age range was 20-21. Majority of the respondents are using their phones/tablets as the means on attending class. More than half of the selected respondents are full-time students. The main source of connection as used by the respondents is WiFi/Landline Connection with a total of 40, followed by Cellular or Mobile Data with 35 respondents. The 8 or 9.64% are using or have an access for both WiFi/Landline and Mobile Data. When asked, these 8 respondents are experiencing all answers are related to the sudden power interruptions and expending on load for mobile data is necessary.

Table 1.2. Status of Ownership on WiFi and Landline Internet Connection (n=48)

Status	f	%
Owned	38	79.17
Shared by Neighbor/Relative	9	18.75
Renting	1	2.08

The table 1.2 shows that majority or 79.17% of the WiFi/Landline users own their internet connection. While 1 outlier or 2.08% rents for accessing the WiFi/Landline.

Table 1.3. Students’ Weekly Expenses Using Mobile Data (n=43)

Expenses	f	%
Below ₱100.00	10	23.26
₱100.00 – ₱200.00	30	69.76
Above ₱200.00	3	6.98

The table 1.3 shows that 69.76% Of mobile data users usually spent ₱100.00 – ₱200.00 pesos weekly for their internet connection.

Table 1.4. Working Students’ Learning-Working Time Schedule (n=24)

Working Schedule	f	%
Weekend	10	41.67
Weekdays	3	12.50
Weekend and Weekdays	11	45.83

Combining the result of students working during weekdays (41.67%) and students who work both weekend and weekdays (45.83), there are 87.5%. This implies that majority of the working students are working during the weekdays.

**Preference on the Level of Synchronous Mode of Learning**

Table 2 shows the findings on the preferred mode of class learning under the subject Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families. Taken as a whole, the preferred mode of learning by the respondents is highly utilized as shown in the overall weighted mean of 3.087.

Table 2. Preference on Level of Synchronous Mode of Learning on Topics under Social Work Practice in Individuals and Families

Course Topics	Level of Synchronous Mode of Learning					Weighted Mean	Descriptive Meaning
	1	2	3	4	5		
Historical Foundation of Social Casework;	9 (11%)	24 (29%)	47 (57%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	2.542	Highly Synchronous
Definition and Concepts of Social Casework;	7 (8%)	30 (36%)	44 (53%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	2.506	Highly Synchronous
Methods of Social Casework;	10 (12%)	33 (40%)	37 (45%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)	2.397	Highly Synchronous
Applied Social Work Principles in Social Casework;	13 (16%)	31 (37%)	37 (45%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2.337	Highly Synchronous
Planned Change and Strategies in Planned Change;	10 (12%)	31 (37%)	40 (48%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	2.361	Highly Synchronous
Roles in Working with Individuals and Families;	15 (18%)	29 (35%)	38 (46%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	2.301	Highly Synchronous
Skills in Working with Individuals and Families;	16 (19%)	31 (37%)	35 (42%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	2.253	Highly Synchronous
Techniques in Working with Individuals and Families;	19 (23%)	28 (34%)	35 (42%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	2.216	Highly Synchronous
Helping Process: Identifying the Problem and Intake	21 (25%)	24 (29%)	36 (43%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2.228	Highly Synchronous
Helping Process: Data-Gathering on the Primary Source	18 (22%)	25 (30%)	37 (45%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)	2.301	Highly Synchronous
Helping Process: Data-Gathering on the Secondary Sources	14 (17%)	24 (29%)	40 (48%)	5 (6%)	0 (0%)	2.433	Highly Synchronous
Helping Process: Data-Gathering on the Tertiary Sources	15 (18%)	24 (29%)	39 (47%)	5 (6%)	0 (0%)	2.409	Highly Synchronous
Helping Process: Diagnostic Assessment	20 (24%)	25 (30%)	36 (43%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	2.192	Highly Synchronous
Helping Process: Planning the Intervention	22 (27%)	21 (25%)	35 (42%)	4 (5%)	1 (1%)	2.289	Highly Synchronous
Helping Process: Plan Implementation	22 (27%)	18 (22%)	37 (45%)	4 (5%)	5 (6%)	2.530	Highly Synchronous
Helping Process: Evaluation	18 (22%)	21 (25%)	41 (49%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	2.361	Highly Synchronous
Helping Process: Termination / Ending Phase	17 (20%)	23 (28%)	39 (47%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	2.373	Highly Synchronous
Case Conference (Preparation & Presentation)	24 (29%)	24 (29%)	34 (41%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	2.156	Highly Synchronous
<b>Overall Weighted Mean:</b>	<b>2.343 (Highly Synchronous)</b>						

*Descriptive Equivalent: 5- Fully Synchronous; 4- Highly Synchronous; 3- Partially Synchronous/Asynchronous; 2- Less Synchronous; 1-Fully Asynchronous*

Specifically, the indicator with the highest preference for synchronous is the: case presentation, with mean frequency count of 2.156. On the other hand, the indicator with the least manifestation but still rated as highly synchronous is the: historical foundation of social casework; with frequency count of 2.542.

There is a slight increase – fully and highly synchronous scales have higher answers – on the level of preference on the items ‘Helping Process: Identifying the Problem and Intake’ ‘Helping Process: Diagnostic Assessment’, ‘Helping Process: Planning the Intervention’, ‘Helping Process: Plan Implementation’, and ‘Case Conference’.

**Perceived Effects of Mode of Learning on Grades and on Acquiring Knowledge**

Table 3.1 & 3.3 depict the results on the perceived effects of the different mode of learning to BS Social Work students’ grades.

Table 3.1. Frequency on the Perceived Effects of Mode of Learning in Terms of Passing the Course

Indicator	Answer	f	%
If the course/subject SW 113: Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families is delivered fully synchronous, do you think you will earn a passing grade?	Yes	70	84.34
	No	13	15.66
If the course/subject SW 113: Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families is delivered fully asynchronous, do you think you will earn a passing grade?	Yes	38	45.78
	No	45	54.22
If the course/subject SW 113: Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families is delivered partially synchronous/asynchronous, do you think you will earn a passing grade?	Yes	77	92.77
	No	6	7.23

Looking unto each indicator, majority or 84.34% of the students perceived that they could earn a passing grade thru Fully Synchronous mode of learning. Taking it on Fully Asynchronous shows that more than half the students perceived that they will not earn a passing grade. While taking the subject on partially synchronous/asynchronous mode of learning shows that majority or 92.77% of the students thinks that they will earn a passing grade on the subject.

Table 3.2. Ranking on the Perceived Effective Mode of Learning for Getting the Highest Level of Knowledge

Mode of Learning	f	Rank
Fully Synchronous	18	3
Highly Synchronous	21	2
Partially Synchronous/Asynchronous	44	1
Less Synchronous	0	4.5
Fully Asynchronous	0	4.5

Table 2.2 shows the results on the ranking of the BS Social Work student’s perceived mode of learning that can provide them with the highest level of knowledge in the course subject. It reveals that BS Social Work students perceived taking the subject on partial synchronous/asynchronous might produce the highest possible level of knowledge in the course subject.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**  
**Conclusions**

The BS Social Work students in Pangasinan are most females. The common means on attending class is thru phone. More than half of the selected respondents are full-time students. The common source of connection used by the respondents is WiFi/Landline Connection. Moreover, majority of mobile-data users does not usually spend more than 200 pesos weekly for their internet connection on attending synchronous class.

BS Social Work Students in Pangasinan prefers a highly synchronous class in taking the course subject ‘Social Work Practice with



Individuals and their Families'. The need of students for level of synchronous mode class depends on whether the topic is theoretical or practical. Students prefer higher level synchronous for topics that are action-based.

Majority of the BS Social Work students in Pangasinan perceived that taking the course subject 'Social Work Practice with Individuals and their Families on fully synchronous mode can make them earn a passing grade. However, more than half of the students perceived that taking the course subject in fully asynchronous cannot make them earn a passing grade. While most of them perceived that they may get a passing grade when taking it thru partially synchronous/asynchronous.

Taking it on partially synchronous/asynchronous ranked first on the perceived mode of learning that can produce the highest level of knowledge in the subject 'Social Work Practice with Individuals and their Families'.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the acquired findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby conferred:

Almost half of the students are still relying on mobile/cellular data on attending online class. To address the issue, Universities should re-align an unused Student-related funds for providing load cards for the eligible and needy students. This intervention grants educational opportunities and can address the possible problems for class mode transition for students and families that barely affords accessing internet. Students should still prioritize their schedule for their subject or the schedule for their subjects should be considered for arranging their work hours. Discussion should be recorded or at least there is a recorded discussion to be accessed by students who might experience connection problems or cannot attend for other reasons.

One of the approaches is to conduct additional schedule for synchronous depending on the complexity of the topic. Syllabus and course guides should be designed a to have a

synchronous schedule focusing on the course topics that are difficult to learn without the explanation of the instructor/professor. Topics focused on application are highly advisable to be conducted in a highly synchronous class mode. It is also highly recommended to design an online psychosocial interventions/approach to utilize the online platform and to lessen the face-to-face interactions for convenience and for safety reasons when dealing with clients during the helping process – application of casework method. Clients that the students will meet will surely have diverse and complex problems and no one specific approach is perfect to use. Instructors and professors should observe the principle of individualization on the students' interventions.

The distribution of time for synchronous and asynchronous learning affects their perception on earning a passing grade in the course subject Social Work Practice with Individuals and Families. Students are more confident to earn higher grades for having synchronous mode. However, a time for online consultation should be given for students who have difficulty during asynchronous learning. Learners also have their own learning styles for gathering and organizing information. It is also recommended that multiple approach and activities that can cater different learning styles should be used. Instructors and professors should be innovative and sensitive to the learners in online learning platform.

BS Social Work perceived that they could obtain higher level of knowledge in the course subject through partially synchronous/asynchronous mode of learning. As to balance the findings for BS Social Work student's perception on earning a high grade through highly synchronous class and obtaining a higher possible knowledge through partially synchronous/asynchronous class: a higher synchronous mode of learning is recommended for the subject and a fair amount time for asynchronous learning to provide them time to acquire more information at their own preferred pacing. Modified handouts and/or study guides must be prepared and shared with the students to

control the students phasing on studying. It is highly encouraged to avoid using acronyms, initialisms, and abbreviations in the learning materials; terminologies should always be spelled out to easily understand by the learners.

### **ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Based on the acquired findings, conclusions, and recommendations the following ethical implications are hereby inferred:

The importance of moral-based character and behavior in online education/teaching/learning as a topic of concern has never been more relevant, particularly at a time when many classes in Higher Education Institutions in the Philippines are online because of the ravaging pandemic. There are ten major reasons why ethical issues in online education/teaching/learning are relevant as of this date, these include accreditation concerns, CHED compliance and implementations issues, the quality of the teaching and learning experience both on the part of the educator and the learner, the number of hours spent in online classroom, quality of engagement and participation of the learners, equity in educational outcomes, student privacy concerns, educators privacy issues, excellence in service delivery through online platforms from the institution, and inclusivity issues.

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