

## CHALLENGES FACED BY FIRST-YEAR BPED STUDENTS ON ONLINE DISTANCE LEARNING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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**Abstract** - The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a drastic shift from traditional to online distance education which resulted in many difficulties to our learning delivery modes. The purpose of this study is to find out what are the challenges of First Year BPED Student in Pangasinan State University, Bayambang Campus on Online Distance Learning Modality. The researcher employed the use of phenomenological approach and thematic analysis which include face-to-face and online interviews, watching recorded Zoom classes and observations were applied to synthesize and identify the challenges during online classes. Physical and digital distractions, technological and technical difficulties, institutional and academic issues, and personal and psychological barriers are the challenges that the learners encounter during online classes. Designating a specific area or gadget for online classes, providing intensive training on how to navigate the online learning platforms, maintaining an open communication between teachers and students, using flipped classroom instruction, strengthening parent-teacher partnership in ensuring guidance while learning from home, and providing guidance and counseling to stakeholders are some of the recommended strategies that are suited to the new normal e-learning modality. This research will serve as a guide for educators and learners and researcher in the use of online distance learning.

**Keywords** – Online Distance Learning Modality, Phenomenological Approach, COVID-19

### INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, an outbreak of a novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, occurred in China and has spread rapidly across the globe within a few months. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that attacks the respiratory system (World Health Organization, 2020).

As of January 2021, COVID-19 has infected 94 million people and has caused 2 million deaths in 191 countries and territories (John Hopkins University, 2021). This pandemic has created a massive disruption of the educational systems, affecting over 1.5 billion students. It has forced the government to cancel national examinations and the schools to temporarily close, cease face to face instruction and strictly observe physical distancing.

Online learning refers to learning environment that uses the Internet and other technological devices and tools for synchronous and asynchronous instructional delivery and management of academic programs (Usher & Barak, 2020; Huang, 2019). Synchronous online learning involves real-time interactions between teacher and the students (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic online learning has taken the status of interim remote teaching that serves as a response to an exigency. However, the migration to a new learning space has faced several major concerns relating to policy, pedagogy, logistics, socioeconomic factors, technology, and psychosocial factors (Donita\_Schmidt & Ramot, 2020; Khalil et al., 2020; Varea & Gonzalez-Calvo, 2020).

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With reference to policies, government education agencies and schools scrambled to create foolproof policies on governance structure, teacher, management, and student management. Teachers, who were used to conventional teaching delivery, were also obliged to embrace technology despite their lack of technological literacy. To address this problem, online learning webinars and peer support systems were launched. On the part of the students, dropout rates increased due to economic psychological, and academic reasons. Academically, although it is virtually possible for student to learn anything online learning may perhaps be less than optimal, especially in courses that require face to face contact and direct interactions (Franchi, 2020). Recently, there has been an explosion of studies relating to the new normal in education. While many focused on national policies, professional development, and curriculum, others zeroed in on the specific learning experience of students during the pandemic. To cope with this problem, students actively dealt with the situation by seeking help from their teachers and relatives and engaging in recreational activities. These active-oriented coping mechanisms of students were aligned with Carter et. Al's (2020), who explored students 'self-regulation strategies.

In other study, Tang et al. (2020) examined the efficacy of different online teaching modes among engineering students. Using a questionnaire, the results revealed that students were dissatisfied with online learning in general, particularly in the aspect of communication and question-and-answer modes.

Nonetheless the combined model of online teaching with flipped classroom improved students 'attention, academic performance, and course evaluation. A parallel study was undertaken by Hew et al. (2020), who transformed conventional flipped classrooms into fully online flipped classes through a cloud-based video conferencing app. Their findings suggested that these two types of learning environments were equally effective. They also offered ways on how to effectively adopt video

conferencing assisted online flipped classrooms. Unlike the two studies, Suryaman et al. (2020), look into how learning occurred at home during the pandemic. Their findings showed that the students faced many obstacles in a home learning environment, such as lack of mastery of technology, high Internet cost, and limited interaction/ socialization between and among students. In related study, Kapasia et al. (2020) investigated how lockdown impacts students learning performance. Their findings revealed that the lockdown made significant disruptions in students learning experience.

The students also reported some challenges that they faced during their online classes. These include anxiety, depression, poor internet service, and unfavorable home learning environment, which were aggravated when students are marginalized and from remote areas. Contrary to Kasipia et al's (2020) findings, Gonzales et al. (2020) found that confinement of students during the pandemic had significant effects on their performance. They attributed these results to students continuous use of learning strategies which, in turn, improved their learning efficiency.

Finally, there are those that focused on students overall online learning experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. One such study was that of Singh et al. (2020), who examined students experience during the COVID-19 pandemic using a qualitative descriptive approach. Their findings indicated that students appreciated the use of online learning during the pandemic. However, half of them believed that the traditional classroom setting was more effective than the online learning platform.

Methodologically, the researches acknowledge that the quantitative nature of their study restricts a deeper interpretation of the findings. Unlike the above study, Khalil et al. (2020) qualitatively explored the efficacy of synchronized online learning in a medical school in Saudi Arabia. The results indicated that students generally perceive synchronous online learning positively, particularly in terms of time management and efficacy. However, they reported technical (internet connectivity and

poor utility of tools), methodological (content delivery), and behavioral (individual personality) challenges. Their findings also highlighted the failure of the online learning environment to address the needs of courses that require hands-on practice despite efforts to adopt virtual laboratories. In a parallel study, Adarkwah (2021) examined students online learning experience during the pandemic using narrative inquiry approach. The findings indicated that Ghanaian students considered online learning as ineffective due to several challenges that they encountered. Among these were lack of social interaction among students, poor communication, lack of ICT resources, and poor learning outcomes.

Although there are few studies that report the online challenges that higher education students experience during the pandemic, limited information is available regarding the specific strategies that they use to overcome them. It is in this context that the current study was undertaken. This mixed-methods study investigates students online learning experience in higher education. Specifically, the following research questions are addressed: (1) What is the extent of challenges that students experience in an online learning environment? (2) How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact the online learning challenges that students experience? (3) What strategies did students use to overcome the challenges?

Online learning is a form of live synchronous platform where it requires both parties to have a good and stable internet connection. Compared to other learning modalities such as face to face and modular, online learning is considered to be more interactive and students are seen responding.

Online learning is one way to continue education in times of uncertainties like the Covid-19 pandemic.

Distance learning, also called distance education, e-learning, and online learning, is a form of education in which the main elements include physical separation of teachers and students during instruction and the use of

various technologies to facilitate student-teacher and student communication (Simonson, 2020). This is in line with the definition of Means which regards online learning as an educational instruction that occurs using web-based technology, which may be engaged in completely asynchronously or with components of synchronous learning, and with no located face-to-face class time (Means, et. al., 2009). Distance education technology allows students to take advantage of the convenience and flexibility of taking classes at the times and locations they prefer (Tuckman, 2007). Based on these definitions, we can see that teachers and students are separated in terms of distance or space, but not necessarily by time. Online learning is thought to have several advantages over traditional face-to-face and blended education, including flexibility and accessibility to study anywhere, at any time, without requiring one's physical presence at a campus location (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009; Van Doorn & Van Doorn, 2014). In addition, learning becomes more learnercentered since it promotes greater participation from them (Markova, et. al., 2017). Despite the conveniences of online distance learning, challenges also are encountered by students and teachers. Distance education provides students much more freedom in how and when they interact; however, Sun & Rueda (2012) argued that their ability to regulate learning becomes critical. Amadora (2020) also pointed out that with the lack of interaction during online classes, students tend to get distracted easily on smartphones, pets, deliveries and many others rather than the ongoing online class. Because face-to-face interaction is absent, it is theorized that students will experience the lack of interest in the online class. On the other hand, Tuckman (2007) found out that students may lack opportunities to collaborate and receive

feedback and social support while Rost (2019) found that online environments can generate a feeling of anonymity to students which makes it easier for students to withdraw or participate minimally or completely disappear from the course. These theories showed that students in online learning suffered from anxieties that lead to lack of participation. In contrast to Tuckman, Greenberg (2008) asserted that students in online learning often feel less pressure to perform individually, and more pressure to collaborate and be part of the team. When this is not taken into consideration, the participation is generally low and dialogue is absent (Palloff & Pratt, 2000). The theories pointed out that online learning puts pressure on students to work more in groups and requires more participation and engagement.

The generation of some younger students are considered to be digital natives. The Internet became a part of their lives since they became aware of their surroundings. And while most are learning new things online and navigating the internet, Rost (2019) believed that issues of digital literacy will prevent some.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study sought to identify the challenges faced by the First Year BPED students in Online Distance Learning of Physical Education in Pangasinan State University, Bayambang Campus during the School Year 2021-2022. The study sought answers to the following:

1. What are the gadgets used by the First Year BPED students in Online Distance Learning of Physical Education?
2. Who are the Internet providers used by the First Year BPED students in Online Distance Learning of Physical Education?
3. How much is the time allotment for online learning?

4. What are the learners' feelings toward distance learning?

5. What are the technological and technical difficulties, physical and digital distractions, personal and psychological barriers, benefits of face to face learning, limitations of face to face learning, benefits of Online Distance Learning, managing Online Classes faced by the First Year Students learners in online learning?

6. What is the impact of the pandemic on learners online learning challenges in terms of:

- 6.1 Self-Regulation Challenges (SRC)
- 6.2 Technological Literacy and Competency Challenges (TLCC)
- 6.3 Learner Isolation Challenges LIC)
- 6.4 Technological Sufficiency Challenges (TSC)
- 6.5 Technological Complexity Challenges (TCC)
- 6.6 Learning Resource Challenges (LRC)
- 6.7 Learning Environment Challenges (LEC)

7. What are the learners strategies to overcome challenges in an online learning environment?

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

The qualitative research design was used in this study. In-depth individual interviews were conducted with the student-participants to explore their insights. The method was based on the phenomenology as the researcher wished to describe their perceptions and lived experiences.

The design selected for this research study was qualitative in nature using interviews, observations, and documents. Qualitative research provides an understanding of a situation or phenomenon that tells the story rather than determining cause and effect (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003: Glesne, 1999).

Schools	Number of Respondents
PSU-BC, Laboratory Integrated Schools	13
Bayambang National High School	10
Moises Rebamontan National High School	10
Tanolong National High School	10
Sanlibo National High School	10
Beleng National High School	10
Hermoza National High School	10
Tococ National High School	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>

**TABLE 1: Distribution of Respondents**

The typology of challenges examined in this study is largely based on Rasheed et al’s (2020) review of students’ experience in an online learning environment. These challenges are grouped into five general cluster, namely self-regulation (SRC), technological literacy and competency (TLCC), learner isolation (LIC) , technological sufficiency (TSC), and technological complexity (TCC) challenges (Rasheed et al., 2020).

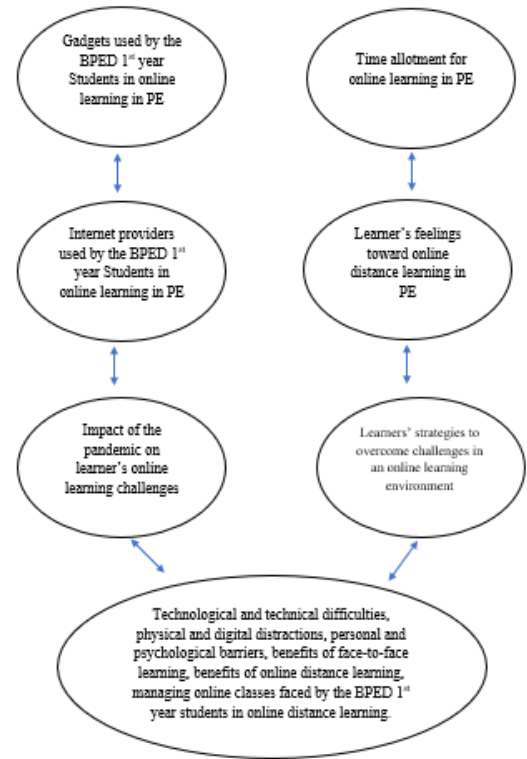


Figure 1. Research Paradigm of the Study

This section represents the results and in-depth of the data obtained in the study. Its finding were based on the gathered through the interview transcriptions and google form results the respondents. These data were then selected, analyzed and interpreted and emerged as the themes used to answer the research problem.

The figure 2 shows the gadgets/technological equipment used by the First Year BPED students in Pangasinan State University, Bayambang, Campus in their Online Distance Learning. Majority of the Learners are using smartphones, with a total of 30 percent, followed by 27 percent learners using laptops, 22 percent of the learners are using desktop computers and 20 percent of them are using tablets for their online class.

FIGURE 2. Gadgets Used in Online Classes

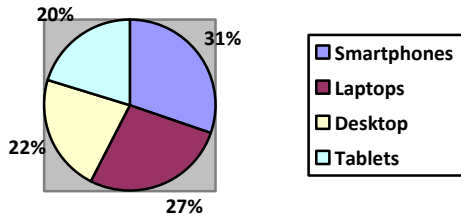


Figure 3 shows which internet provider these learners used in their online class. PLDT Home Fiber has the most with 65.3 percent. Next is Converge ICT with 18.4 percent, followed by Globe DSL Broadband with 10.2 percent.

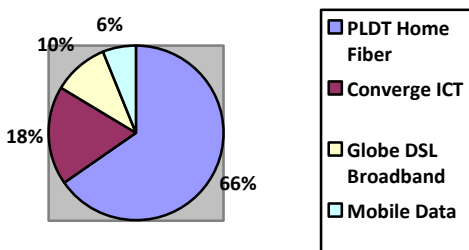


FIGURE 3. Internet Providers

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Technological and Technical Difficulties

The table presents the technological and technical difficulties faced by learners.

TABLE 2

### Technological and Technical Difficulties

THEME	QUOTATIONS
POOR INTERNET CONNECTIVITY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I have slow internet connection</li> <li>2. I experience lagging and intermittent internet loss during class.</li> <li>3. Due to poor connection, the smooth flow of the teachers discussion is interrupted so I cannot understand what the teacher discussed.</li> <li>4. I have no intent provider so I just use Mobile data</li> </ol>

**Poor Internet Connectivity.** Learners cited poor internet connectivity as one of the major challenges in their online distance learning. According to a study released by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), bad internet connection is a more pressing problem in the Philippines compared to poverty and corruption.

### Physical and Digital Distractions

The table presents the lack of concentration, which is a challenge under physical and digital distractions.

TABLE 3

**Physical and Digital Distractions**

THEME	QUOTATIONS
Lack of Concentration	1. I am distracted due to the noise coming from another classmates house like noisy neighbors, cry of baby, barking dogs and some vehicle noises  2. I cannot focus since some parents of my classmates join our zoom class  3. Too much noise  4. Too rowdy when all of them are online at one.

**Lack of Concentration.** Due to the nature of online learning, learners face challenges when it comes to their ability to concentrate in their classes. As the majority of learners do online classes at home, the environment and other factors have contributed in the effectiveness of online learning. One uttered his disappointment.

Lack of Support. While online class is becoming a very popular means of continuing education since the pandemic, challenges encountered by learners emerged as they continue to use online learning.

THEME	QUOTATIONS
Lack of Motivation	1. I run around and don't like to study online since the ambiance is inviting me to just play and relax 2. Online class is not fun 3. Too much activity and less time on teaching 4. Fewer interactions with fellow students. Can't feel the essence of school learning
Poor Comprehension and Retention	1. The teacher didn't explain the lesson well because of limited time in online class 2. I learn more effectively if I see my teacher in person while discussing 3. I forget what I learned the next day 4. Students just listen to the teacher to be able to answer the activity, but they are not actually learning
Lack of Support	1. I am having a hard time coping with the lessons, for there will be no other day to explain things further and my guardians or parents can't help me all the time. 2. There are lots of activities and I cannot do it alone without my parents and guardians 'help.

Table 4

**Personal and Psychological Barriers**

**Lack of Motivation and Participation.** The learners lack of motivation and Participation in online classes became another concern of teachers and parents. As there is no face to face interaction, more and more learners lost their interest in participating in online classes. **Poor Comprehension and Retention.** Just like face to face, ODL also has some disadvantages. One of which is the lack of retention of what they learned.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The gadget/technological equipment used by the first year BPED students in their online distance learning. Majority of the learner are using smartphones, with a total of 22, followed by 20 learners using laptops. Sixteen learners are using desktop computers and 15 of them are using tablets for their online class. The internet provider these learners used in their online class are PLDT Home Fiber has the most with 65.3 percent. Next is Converge ICT with 18.4 percent, followed by Globe DSL

Broadband with 10.2 percent. The time spent in the learner's online classes. Most of the learners spent 3-4 hours, taking up 28.6 percent while 20.4 percent spent 1 hour and 30 minutes. 16.3 percent of learners spent 2 hours, while other spent an hour and some spent 30 minutes, taking up 14.3 percent. The overall feelings of learners toward online distance learning. Majority of the learners felt that it was good, with 42.9 percent. Average, for some learners taking up 36.7 percent, 12.2 percent felt that it was below average and very little felt that the online class was excellent and below average.

Learner cited poor internet connectivity as one of the major challenges in their online distance learning. The slow internet connection has affected most, if not the majority of the learners specially in remote areas of the city where connection is far more inconsolable. This has resulted in learners missing part of the lesson. Some learners don't have the luxury of having laptops or tablets and Internet providers. Some used their mobile data on their phone to connect to their online class.

Due to the nature of online learning, learners face challenges when it comes to their ability to concentrate in their classes. As the majority of learners do online classes at home, the environment and other factors have contributed greatly in the effectiveness of online learning.

Most houses aren't built with soundproofs. All the noises coming from inside and outside the house are beyond control. Also, privacy is a challenge as most families are crammed in a small house or apartment, leaving no room intended for online class.

The learner's lack of motivation and participation in online classes became another concern of teachers and parents. As there is no face to face interaction, more and more learners lost their interest in participating in online classes.

Unlike face to face classes limited the teacher's involvement in the disciplining of the child. The role was then transferred to the parents as they are in their own homes.

Having too many activities during online class and less time teaching has left learners unmotivated to attend class as their time was devoted in making them instead.

Just like face to face, ODL also has disadvantages. One of which is the lack of retention of what they learned. One parent observed that learners only listen to the teacher in order for them to accomplish the activity at hand, but there is no real learning because the information is not anymore remembered the next day.

Despite the challenges presented by ODL and the issues affecting the learners attitude towards online classes, these primary learners have to manage at such a young age so learning could continue amidst this pandemic. Almost all of the respondents sought the help from their parents, grandparents, siblings, or other family members during online classes, especially in manipulating their gadgets and in answering their activities. If a family member is not available to help, the activity is postponed or set aside until someone is available to help. This is real and authentic scenario in accomplishing given homework and activities. If nobody can assist the child, the tendency is to either learn or study independently or to just depend on others which would cause laziness and demotivation.

On the other hand, in order to avoid unnecessary disturbances during the online class, most of them prepare what they need such as paper, pen, colors, and books so that when teacher asks them to get pen and paper for example, they are readily available. A few mentioned parents taking charge of everything so that the learners will not encounter any problem during the online class. This can confirm the previous answer of the respondents that parents cannot work full time because they really have to attend to their children. Parents also do the managing for their children so that they do not get frustrated with their studies.

Overall findings indicate that the extent of challenges and strategies varied from one learner to another. Hence, they should be viewed as a consequence of interaction several many factors. Learners' responses suggest that their



online learning challenges and strategies were mediated by the resources available to them, their interaction with teachers and peers, and the school's existing policies and guidelines for online learning. In the context of the pandemic, the imposed lockdowns and learners socio-economic condition aggravated the challenges that learners experience.

Among all the different online learning challenges, the learners experienced the least challenge on technological literacy and competency. This is not surprising considering a plethora of research confirming Gen Z learners high technological and digital literacy.

Regarding the impact of COVID-19 on students online learning experience, the findings reveal that teaching and learning quality and learners mental health were the most affected. The anxiety that learners experienced does not only come from the threats of COVID-19 itself but also from social and physical restrictions, unfamiliarity with new learning platforms, technical issues, and concerns about financial resources. This data highlights the needed to provide serious attention to the mediating effects of mental health, restriction in mobility, and preparedness in delivering online learning.

Nonetheless, learners employed a variety of strategies to overcome the challenges they faced during online learning. For instance, to address the home learning environment problems, learners talked to their family transferred to a quieter place, studied at late night where all family members are sleeping already, and consulted with their classmates and teachers. To overcome the challenges in learning resources, asked help from family members, used available at home, and consulted with the teachers. The varying strategies of learners confirmed earlier reports on the active orientation that learners take when faced with academic- and non-academic-related issues in an online learning space. The specific strategies that each learner adopted may have been shaped by different factors surrounding him/her, such as available resources, learner personality, family structure, relationship with peers and teacher and aptitude.

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