

When the Dimmest Light Shines the Brightest: Lived Experiences of ISAT-U Students During Covid-19 Pandemic

Richy D. Dequito

Ed.D. Iloilo Science and Technology University, Dumangas Campus

Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic has shocked the world and badly impacted all sectors of life especially public health, economy, and education. Researches have underscored that pandemic leads to unpredictability, uncertainty, seriousness of the disease, misinformation and social isolation, which causes stress and mental morbidity, especially among youth including college students. The aim of this study was to determine the significant changes that the ISAT-U students experienced as the “new normal” set-up of education commences. This study also highlighted the challenges experienced by five students, who were identified as the participants of the study through purposive sampling, attending to their classes while the country is under the pandemic as well as the lessons they learned in life during the pandemic. The results revealed that students of ISAT U-Dumangas Campus has experienced significant changes in their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic such as the hostile effects of home quarantine. Their mental and psychological health have been challenged. They also discovered a lot of things about themselves during pandemic while they stayed at home such as their talents and skills. On the other hand, the participants experienced level of anxiety and stress brought about by the pandemic. This was exacerbated by their online classes where they found it difficult to connect to the internet. Meanwhile, time management seemed to be working with the participants in coping with the pandemic as well as their school requirements. Being optimistic and have faith in God Almighty were the things they learned during the pandemic that helped them get through the challenges and difficulties they experienced during pandemic.

Key words: COVID-19 pandemic, college students’ experiences, multi-case study

Introduction

The World Health Organization has declared COVID-19 as a pandemic that has posed a contemporary threat to humanity. This pandemic has successfully forced global shutdown of several activities including educational activities and has resulted in tremendous crisis-response migration of universities with online learning, serving as the educational platform.

COVID-19 outbreak has brought many effects and challenges on the lives of the students. This pandemic has disrupted many opportunities for them to explore recent breakthroughs in a face to face learning modalities and most especially worries and challenges on how to cope with their academic performance which has lasting effect on their emotional and mental health.

Widespread outbreaks of infectious disease, such as COVID-19, are associated with psychological distress and symptoms of mental illness (Bao et al., 2020). Zandifar and Badrfam (2020) highlighted the role of unpredictability, uncertainty, seriousness of the disease, mis-information and social isolation in

contributing to stress and mental morbidity. The authors highlighted the need for both mental health services, particularly for vulnerable populations, and the strengthening of social capital to reduce the adverse psychological impact of the outbreak. Meanwhile, Shigemura et al. (2020) emphasized the economic impact of COVID-19 and its effects on well-being, as well as the likely high levels of fear and panic behavior, such as hoarding and stockpiling of resources, in the general population. Other researches pointed out that the wide scope and spread of COVID-19 could lead to a true mental health crisis, especially in countries with high caseloads, which would require both large-scale psycho-social crisis interventions, and the incorporation of mental health care in disaster management plans in the future (Dong and Bouey, 2020; Duan and Zhu, 2020).

Although several studies have assessed mental health issues during epidemic, most have focused on health workers, patients, children, and the general population (Lai et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2020).

Nelson et al. (2020) have found elevated levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms among general population samples in North America and Europe. Researches from China (Cao et al., 2020; Wang & Zhao, 2020) notably highlights evidence of the psychological or mental health effects of the current pandemic on college students. However, the findings from these studies may not necessarily be generalizable to populations in other countries. As highlighted in multiple recent correspondences, there is an urgent need to assess effects of the current pandemic on the mental health and well-being of college students (de Oliveira Araújo et al., 2020; Holmes et al., 2020; Zhai & Du, 2020).

The aim of this study was to determine the significant changes that the ISAT-U students experienced as the “new normal” set-up of education commences. This study also highlighted the challenges experienced by these students attending to their classes while the country is under the pandemic as well as the lessons they learned in life as they experienced the “new normal” education.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to determine the lived experiences of ISAT-U students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What significant changes do these students experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How does COVID-19 pandemic changes the lives of these students?
3. How do these students cope with the challenges brought about by COVID-19 pandemic?
4. What lifelong lessons/realizations do these students learn with their COVID-19 pandemic experiences?

Methodology

Research methodology is composed of the research design, participants, data gathering tool, data gathering procedure, data analysis procedure, ethical considerations and procedures to establish trustworthiness and objectivity.

Research Design

This study will be used a qualitative research design, a case study. A case study is an in-depth

investigation of a single person, group, event or community. Data are gathered from a variety of sources and by using several different methods (e.g. observations and interviews (McLeod, 2008). The case study method often involves observation of what happens to, or reconstruction of “the history” of a single participant or group of individuals (such as a school, class or specific group), i.e. idiographic approach. The researcher opted for a case study design employing five participants to really capture the experiences and insights of the students during COVID-19 Pandemic.

Participant

The five participants in this multi-case study were the BIT, BSIT and BVTED students. These students were pre-identified from a number of students. These five were identified and eventually agreed to participate in the study. Ethical considerations, such as trustworthiness and objectivity, were observed in the duration of the study.

Data Gathering Tool

The instrument used in the study was the self-made interview guide. This was to gather data from the participants identified. The interview guide contained open-ended questions to give the participants freedom to express their answers. The researcher’s self-made interview-guide was composed of two parts: (1) demographic profile of the participants; and (2) question-guide.

The demographic profile of the participants was composed of several items such as their name that is optional, sex, course, and year level. Part two was composed of four questions on: (1) significant changes they experienced during pandemic; (2) effects of pandemic on their studies; (3) their coping strategies; and (4) the lessons that they learned during the pandemic.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to the conduct of interview with the five participants of the study via Facebook and google meet, the researcher obtained permission from the campus administrator. Likewise, a permission to conduct the interview with the student-participants were sought in order to encourage them to support the researcher all throughout the study. The participants were also assured that the information

they gave would be used for research purposes only and would be treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity. Furthermore, the participant's choice of whether or not to participate did not influence their relationship with the investigation in school, with the researcher and their grades. When everything was set, the scheduled interview pushed through. All interviews with the participants were conducted by the researcher. It took more than a month for the researcher to finish the interview with the participants. One interview with the participant actually took more than an hour. The researcher jotted down the important details that the interviewee gave. For some information which were not cleared, the researcher set another time for the participant to be interviewed again through google meet.

Trustworthiness

Establishing both credibility and reliability is crucial when conducting quality research that employs qualitative method. Establishing credibility demonstrates internal validity with correspondence between participants' perspectives and how the researcher portrays their viewpoints (Mertens, 2005). In efforts to establish credibility, the researcher used prolonged and substantial engagement, progressive subjectivity, member checks, and triangulation (Mertens, 2005). Trust is important in every research that concerns interviewing participants. Prior to the administration of the interview schedule or the interview proper, the researcher genuinely talked to each participant and disclosed the true nature of the study to get the participant's trust. This would likewise establish rapport with the interviewee so that the veracity of the information given by the interviewee is established. On the other hand, in the conduct of the study, the researcher took into considerations the ethical issues knowing that the study made use of students as participants. To protect the participants of the study, the researcher developed trust and confidence with them in order to promote the integrity of the research, guard against misconduct and any impropriety that can be reflected in their institutions, and cope with new challenging (Creswell, 2009). The researcher respected their rights, needs, values and desires. Furthermore, the researcher was very careful in

asking sensitive questions for they may appear offensive to the participants.

Establishing Objectivity

The fact that the study's results are dependent upon the participant's answers, which are in turn, in a way, may be affected by the researcher's interpretation, biases may set in. In order to avoid personal biases in the interpretation of results, the researcher avoided personal interpretation of the participants' answers. The researcher tried to clarify the participants' answers by asking follow up questions. Triangulation of the data and information were likewise done through observing the participants' non-verbal cues during the interview.

Ethical Consideration

The study aimed to determine the lived experiences of ISAT-U students during the COVID-19 pandemic. To address this general objective, the following ethical considerations were considered prior to the conduct of the study:

Informed Consent. Prior to the interview proper with the participants, the researcher sought consent to participate in the study from the participants. The purpose of the study, the extent of participation to the study were disclosed to them through the cover letter in the research interview schedule.

Voluntary Participation. After the consent of the respondent was sought, the researcher emphasized to the participants that their participation to the study is voluntary and they could withdraw their participation anytime in the phase of the study.

Do no harm. The cover letter of the research interview schedule, which was handed in prior to the conduct of the interview, included statement that the research and the researcher will never expose the participants and their family to any harm or risk.

Confidentiality. The cover letter to the participants also included enclosure on confidentiality. The researcher emphasized to the participants that the results of the study will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be used for research purposes only.

Anonymity. Enclosure in the cover letter to the participants also included statement on their anonymity. The researcher underscored that the identity of the participants will not be disclosed in any phase of the research process.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data from the interview were transcribed into word processing files. Once transcribed into word files, data analysis began by generating a list of themes and codes to provide evidence reflective of broader perspectives. Confidentiality on the information given by the participants was achieved by using pseudonym codes.

Prior to the analysis of the result, the researcher transcribed the interview records by noting only relevant information. The analysis of the relevant data gathered mainly employed thematic analysis procedure. After which, individual answers of the participants were analyzed and reflected in specific parts of this paper. Part of the analysis was the establishment of the themes for the answers of the participants. The themes then were used as bases for the discussion and analysis of the results.

Results And Discussions

Significant Changes Experienced

The pandemic has changed health care approach both positive and negative effect all over the world (Health Essentials, 2020). It also revealed that pandemic has triggered a wave of mental health issues. Whether it is managing addiction, depression, social isolation or just the general stress that's resulted from COVID-19.

On the other hand, the article titled "One year later: 15 ways life has changed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic" written by Lodell and other staff dated March 9, 2021 that appeared in *Fortune* website, enumerated 15 ways how COVID-19 pandemic changed human lives based on the survey they conducted. The changes includes work from home set-up, distorted sense of time, the way people workout, renewed gratitude for essential workers, a chronology of pandemic-fueled shortages, various considerations the working parents juggle a change of appetite, shining a light on inequality, remote learning, renewed relationship with nature, the decimation of women

in the workplace, a mental health crisis, a diminished college experience, TikTok's big moments, and the COVID class masters.

The students of ISAT U-Dumangas Campus were not spared from the significant changes that they experienced during the onset of COVID-19 pandemic. Most of them noted that they had to adjust to the new set-up especially staying at home during lockdowns. They also had hard time budgeting their money for the essentials as some of their family members lost their jobs. However, one thing that they experienced significantly was that they were able to discover more things about themselves—their talents, skills, and other interests.

'Home Quarantine' Effect

"I was only permitted to go out if I have important things to buy," narrated by Participant A, a female BIT-Electronics 4 students who experienced being restricted to stay at home during the pandemic. *"My parents always reminded me to wear facemask if ever I go to public places. I have no choice but to follow the protocols of the government and also my parents,"* she jokingly added as she elaborated the significant changes that she experienced during the pandemic. According to her she used to go out prior to the pandemic and most of her time was spent outside, either to study with other classmates or simply hang-out with them. Now that the country has been declared under pandemic, going out has been also restricted.

Participant D, a BTVTED 2-A, CHS student also experienced the same phenomenon. She quipped that she could not do extra job and her family financially suffered a lot.

"I cannot go out especially in public places because my parents will not allow me. I cannot do some extra work and we financially suffered a lot because my family do not have a stable income to feed everybody."

This "home quarantine" has taken its toll on most of the population especially the youth. The home quarantine and lockdown situation caused by the COVID-19 crisis have affected the well-being of families and challenged the ability of parents to carry out parenting responsibilities by imposing more education and care responsibilities

(Mangiavacchi et al., 2020). As Participant A underscored, she had to “follow the protocols of the government and her parents” as well. Adjustments had to be done, especially that both parents and children are at home.

On the other hand, students’ mental health has been one of the most controversial issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. As Participant C stated, *“Nababahala at naatatokot ako palagi lalo nang wala nang makakain at perang pambili ng pangangailangan namin.” (I felt restless. I felt fear and was always nervous. My family has no money to buy food and everything if this pandemic stay longer).*

Her feeling was consistent with research findings around the world. During the COVID-19 quarantine period, more than 20% of adolescents had anxiety and depression. Long-term home restrictions might have adverse effects on mental health of adolescents because of a sharp change of lifestyles and various stressors, such as fears of infection, frustration, and boredom (Chan et al., 2010; Ciprandi et al., 2015). The study of Wang et al. (2020) revealed that anxiety and depression were closely associated with daily life under home restrictions among adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic period, especially some factors that could be easily ignored, such as perceived discrimination and ability to study. A multi-sectoral collaboration has been called on to pay attention to these associations and to take necessary counter measures.

Self-discovery

Forming a routine can take a long time and is highly variable between individuals (Arlinghaus & Johnston, 2019). As in quarantine, people can use their days to develop themselves personally to form a regular habit which they were planning to form but got distracted due to any reasons. As the pandemic has changed the world and pushed people into their homes and out of old routines, it has also, for many, revealed some surprising traits within themselves—confidence, resilience, passion. The luxury of self-reflection without life's usual distractions has taken some people elsewhere, the relationship with God, their value as workers, their shocking ability to do without people.

Researchers and politicians, psychologists and health institutions will spend years combing through the shards of this time. As they do, Participant C in Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo, will hopefully be well established as a BIT expert. This pandemic has taught her to discover more about herself and her interests.

“Bilang isang estudyante may mga pagbabagong naganap sa aking sarili’t buhay na hindi inaasahang mangyayari. Noon, wala akong hilig maglaro ng badminton ngunit sa pagkakaroon ng pandemya, naging mahusay at naging sanay sa paglalaro nito gayundin sa pagguhit at pagpinta. Naging masipag din akong tumutulong sa aking mga magulang lalo na sa pagdidilig ng mga halaman at mga bulaklak na mga pananim namin na kahit papaano, napagkakakitaan naming magpamilya. Ang dami ko nang inilaang oras at panahon sa pakikipagkwentuhan sa aking mga magulang. Napag-usapan namin na kailangang maging maingat sa aming kalusugan, panlaban sa Corona Virus.

“According to Case C, as a student, there are changes that happened which she did not expect to happen to herself. She discovered something which she’s not interested before like painting and expert in playing badminton. She’s also industrious in watering the plants, helping her parents. She had already more time spending to her family. She added that she is very careful with regards to her health habits in order to have resistance to fight corona virus.

Participant C also emphasized and realized that she need to be very careful with regards to her health habits in order to have extra resistance against corona-virus. Meanwhile, Participant E, a BTVTED CHS 2-A student also agreed that she has made new discoveries about herself during the pandemic. *“I discovered that I could actually be thrifty and live only to what I have,”* she shared as she narrated her experiences during the pandemic. According to her, she had established a closer relationship with her family by becoming simple in

her lifestyle. This led her to save a little and spare some for the essential needs of the family.

Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on Studying

Globally, the pre-lockdown learning of children and adolescents predominantly involved one-to-one interaction with their mentors and peer groups. Unfortunately, the nationwide closures of schools and colleges have negatively impacted over 91% of the world's student population (Lee, 2020). The home confinement of children and adolescents is associated with uncertainty and anxiety which is attributable to disruption in their education, physical activities and opportunities for socialization (Jiao et al., 2020). Absence of structured setting of the school for a long duration result in disruption in routine, boredom and lack of innovative ideas for engaging in various academic and extra-curricular activities. Some children have expressed lower level effect for not being able to play outdoors, not meeting friends and not engaging in the in-person school activities. These children have become more clingy, attention seeking and more dependent on their parents due to the long term shift in their routine. It is presumed that students might resist going to school after the lockdown gets over and may face difficulty in establishing rapport with their mentors after the schools re-open. Consequently, the constraint of movement imposed on them can have a long-term negative effect on their over-all psychological well-being (Lee, 2020).

Meanwhile, a study found that students are anxious regarding cancellation of examinations, exchange programs and academic events (Lee, 2020). Current studies related to COVID-19 demonstrate that school shut downs in isolation prevent about 2-4% additional deaths which is quite less if compared to usage of other measures of social distancing. Moreover, they suggest to the policy makers that other less disrupting social distancing strategies should be followed by schools if social distancing is recommended for a long duration (Lee, 2020; Sahu, 2020).

ISAT U- Dumangas Campus had implemented modular and fb social learning modality due to this pandemic. This has also taken its toll to both teachers and students. As observed by the researchers, many teachers have been groping in

the dark especially with the use of technology to enhance delivery of instructions. Teachers and students alike were not prepared for the "new normal" set-up of education as the country was placed under pandemic state. Everybody was adjusting to the challenges that affected all aspects of human life most especially mental and psychological. Students have been struggling also as they embrace the distance learning.

Anxiety and Stress Level Shoot-up

College students comprise a population that is considered particularly vulnerable to mental health concerns. The findings of the study of (Son et al. 2020) bring into focus the effects of pandemic-related transitions on the mental health and well-being of this specific population. Their findings suggest a considerable negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on a variety of academic-, health-, and lifestyle-related outcomes. By conducting online survey interviews in the midst of the pandemic, they found that a majority of the participants were experiencing increased stress and anxiety due to COVID-19 (Denovan et al., 2019).

Stress and anxiety have previously been shown to adversely affect students' confidence in themselves, which is positively correlated to their performance in school (Martin, 2010). In comparison with stress and anxiety in college students' general life, it appears that counter-measures put in place against COVID-19, such as shelter-in-place orders and social distancing practices, may have underpinned significant changes in students' lives.

As underscored by Participant A, she had a lot of worries in school because the enrollment process is already online.

"Kailangan naming magpaload para may connectivity sa internet dahil kailangan online itong proseso sa pagpapatala.

Dagdag pa na hindi pwede mag On the Job Training (OJT)

na face to face kaya na stress talaga ako pag hindi makapasok

online sa pagpatatala lalo na't kailangan na naming mag-O-OJT."

According to Case A, she need to buy load for her mobile phone to connect to the internet, to process

the online enrollment. She was worried and stressed because this time, she is already having her OJT.

On the other hand, Participant C relate that she felt restless, fear and always nervous. She just hoped that the pandemic would end soon so that he could get back to work together with her other family members to augment the family's financial resources.

"Kung tatagal pa ang pandemic na ito, wala na kaming makakain at walang perang pambili ng mga pangangailangan namin. Nabahala at na-stressed talaga ako sa nangyayari sa buhay namin ngunit wala akong magawa. Ipinasa-Diyos ko na lang ang lahat na gabayan Niya kami na malampasan ang lahat nang ito." (If this pandemic will last longer, we have no more food to eat, and no money to buy for the things that we need. I felt stressed and worried but I had no choice. I only lift up to the Lord, to guide us always so that we could overcome this problem).

The result of the study is consistent with the study conducted by (Hamaideh et al. 2021) titled, "Depression, anxiety and stress among undergraduate students during COVID-19 outbreak and "home-quarantine". The study showed that university students suffered from depression, anxiety and stress during "home-quarantine" period of COVID-19 outbreak. Number of factors contributed to gravitate the psychological disturbances including online education, and sleeping and eating disturbances, in addition to socio-demographic and lifestyle factors. The sources of psychological disturbances among university students are multi-dimensional. The role of psychological intervention such as online mindfulness and other simple relaxation technique also can be helpful during "home-quarantine" (Hatta, 2020). Also, the issues of depression, stress and anxiety are still high even if quarantine and lockdown were lifted (Woon et al., 2020). Depression, anxiety and stress are serious mental conditions that require attention of academic mental health counsellors. University students are in need to high-quality and crises-oriented psychological services (Cao et al., 2020).

The study (Hamaideh et al., 2021) indicated that mental health is a core component of well-being. University students suffer moderate levels of depression, anxiety and stress inferring that during

quarantine periods university students are vulnerable to serious mental illnesses if no appropriate interventions are indicated. Sleep and eating disturbances, concern about academic grades, and feeling of loneliness are significant elements that need to be addressed and taking care of by mental health nurses and counsellors at academic institution and counselling departments. Faculty members and administrators are responsible also for providing appropriate psychological support and not to overwhelm students during quarantine times.

Difficulty in Studying

Aside from stress and anxiety that college students of ISAT U- Dumangas Campus experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of them also experienced difficulty with regards to their studies. Most of the students have difficulty complying with the course requirements especially those that needed to be sent online, with the use of the internet. Students uttered or clamored that internet connectivity has been one of their major problems because many areas in their places have poor or no internet signal at all.

Among the participants, Participant B articulated that she had difficulty in answering her module especially if the lesson, needed internet connectivity to accomplish the requirements.

"Internet connection was very poor. I have to connect at midnight or early morning just to access the internet. Sometimes, I struggle also on how to have load for my mobile phone. I also have no laptop, which makes studying difficult especially if we are told to download some lessons online."

Participant D also agreed to the sentiments of Participant B. At her end, she narrated that she found it hard to do assigned tasks that requires internet connectivity.

"Although we were given more time to answer the assigned task, it was still difficult especially with the unstable internet connection. If we were going to research about the lessons, we need to look for a better place in which internet connectivity is strong. It is also difficult to adjust in this situation, if no laptop and internet."

The results of the study, as narrated by the students, are supported by the findings of the study conducted by Baticulon et al. (2021), "Barriers to

online learning in the time of COVID-19: A national survey of medical students in the Philippines” who came up with relevant results on the difficulty that college students experienced during the pandemic. The results showed that medical students in the Philippines confronted technological, individual, domestic, institutional, and community barriers as they tried to adapt to online learning. Some of these barriers are transient and expected to resolve with the global health crisis; others may persist or have long-term repercussions. Moreover, the economic consequences of the pandemic heightened disparities in medical education, often in favor of those with greater access to resources. Without appropriate intervention, barriers to online learning would not just affect the education and training of future physicians. On a wider scale, even the nation’s delivery of healthcare services may be disrupted. By implementing student-centered interventions, medical schools and educators play a significant role in addressing these challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

On the other hand, the result of the study is not supported by the findings of Son et al. (2020) that highlighted even though most of the participants expressed concerns regarding academic performance, interestingly, most of them reported lower stress levels related to academic pressure and class workload since the pandemic began. This may be due, in part, to decisions taken by professors and the university to ease the students’ sudden transition to distance learning. For instance, this university allowed students to choose a pass/fail option for each course instead of a regular letter grade. Additionally, actions taken by professors, such as reduced course loads, open book examinations, and other time allowances on grading requirements, could also have contributed to alleviating or reducing stress. Although participants who returned to their parental home reported concerns about distractions and independence, students might have benefited from family support and reduced social responsibilities. Therefore, the increased stress due to the pandemic may have been offset, at least to some extent.

While the majority of colleges and universities around the world integrate some form of online

education into their coursework, moving all programs online may prove challenging. While some universities may already have strong online systems, smaller universities may struggle under the weight of the demand. University course creators should work closely with their IT departments to ensure their programs are able to be supported online.

Time Management as a Coping Strategy

Stress is undoubtedly a part of students’ lives and it may impact their ways of coping with the demands of university life. Their daily responsibilities involve numerous challenges which lead to stress (Pariat et al., 2014). Results from various studies carried out thus far show a clear increase in mental health problems among students (Son et al., 2020). As some of them indicate, there is also an urgent need to assess the impact of the current pandemic on students’ mental health and wellbeing (de Oliveira Araújo et al., 2020).

According to Lazarus and Folkman, coping with stress might be related to negative health behaviors (Folkman et al., 2016). (Metzger et al. 2017) analyzed the frequency of negative health behaviors among students. They found that increased alcohol consumption and risky sexual behaviors are typical for people at risk for significant stress. Styles of coping with stress are determined by gender, education, age, health, well-being, the nature of the stressful situation, personality factors, and others. Efficient use of emotions allows for more effective problem solving, while venting anger and frustration and denial of reality are potentially destructive reactions to stress (Cao et al., 2020). Expressing emotions might also lead to lower depression and hostility levels in stressful situations. Some authors distinguish between emotion-focused and problem-focused coping styles, while others distinguish active and avoidant coping or identify mal-adaptive coping strategies (denial, substance use, venting of negative emotions) which allow for lowering subjectively experienced stress (Makarowski et al., 2020).

The participants of the study generally agreed that their coping strategies during the pandemic was that they had to manage their time. According to Participant B, in order to cope with the pressures of

academic requirements and the challenges posted by the pandemic, she just have to manage her time. *"I just have to manage my time in order for me to submit the requirements on time," she shared.*

Participant E also underscored that she even entertained the idea of quitting school during the pandemic because of the challenges and difficulties that she and her family experienced. However, she became more optimistic and decided to continue and hurdle all the challenges.

"During pandemic, it came out to my mind sometimes to stop schooling especially my course needs focus on how to manage everything. I just tried to be more optimistic and look forward to a better day every day. All I needed to do is to manage my time so that I can meet the course requirements. I just tried to be more flexible and used time management wisely."

Time management consisted of several indicators. Activities such as planning, organizing, mobilizing and controlling time productivity are efforts to manage time or time management (Sari & Megayanti, 2021). Hasan Al Banna quoted that "time is life and has a value that cannot be matched by any property" (Stewart, Miertschin & Goodson, 2020). Time is a moment that its existence must take advantage of, time can tire for those who use it, and time cannot be replaced because time is running and rolling. Time management is also important in realizing organizational goals; where people and resources need to be planned, organized, directed and controlled.

Management of activity required planning for the activities to be carried out. According to (Sumbogo et al. 2021) "planning is a process of setting and determining goals and what activities must be done to make it happen". Planning has benefits in carrying out activities, namely the goals become clearer, more objective, and rational. Ability to obey the time schedule set is one of indicators of time management. In the context of time management, obeying time is an activity in obeying time. The time in question is the planned time at the planning stage.

Lesson Learned

In the case of the participants, one thing that they learned with this COVID-19 pandemic is to

become positive or optimistic about the things that are happening around. Optimism is described as a generalized tendency to expect favorable experiences about future events (Genç & Arslan, 2021). According to Carver and his colleagues (2010), optimism provides a better understanding of human behaviors and thoughts. Specifically, optimistic people have a positive outlook, believe good things will happen in the future and are motivated to show effort even in the face of difficulties (Scheier & Carver, 1985).

Participant B emphasized that life must go on despite the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought. According to her, the pandemic alone has taught human beings a lot of lessons and one of them is to be optimistic.

"This time of pandemic, there are many realizations and lessons learned that happened in my life. I always try to be strong in times of troubles and whatever challenges that I encounter in life. Think positive; this is one thing that kept me going during this time of pandemic. Look at the brighter side of things always."

On the other hand, Participant A also agreed that optimism kept her sane in the height of the pandemic. She mentioned that she did not lose any hope that things would get better and her family could hurdle all the troubles that the pandemic has caused them. *"I just keep on hoping for a better day. I told my family that we will get this through,"* she emphasized.

Based on the literature, optimism and hope can be considered as the essential trails in coping with destructive life events by believing in a better future, thereby, optimism and hope may serve as mitigating factors in the association between coronavirus stress and subjective well-being (Genç & Arslan, 2021). As individuals are adversely affected by the measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary to understand the link between stress and quality of life in such times. Given the literature indicating the impacts of positive psychology variables on wellbeing, it is expected that being confident in finding ways to achieve goals and having a positive outlook, even in difficult times, might be the core aspect of quality of life and happiness.

“Always think positive and be strong to fight this COVID-19,”

exclaimed by Participant E when asked about the lessons she

learned during this pandemic.

She added that her positive outlook in life leads her to make sound decisions in life that most of the time are converted to something good.

Strengthen Faith in God

In spite of the present pestilence, Divine Providence is not in doubt. God, with wisdom and love, cares for and directs all things in the universe, and is in complete control of all things. He is sovereign over the universe as a whole (Psalm 103:19), the physical world (Matthew 5:45), the affairs of nations (Psalm 66:7), human destiny (Galatians 1:15), human successes and failures (Luke 1:52), and the protection of His people (Psalm 4:8).

Decades of research shows that religious individuals use spirituality and religion to cope during times of stress (Ano and Vasconcelles 2005; Koenig 2018), and accordingly during the COVID-19 pandemic, interest in religion has soared. This is unsurprising given that religion is a key aspect of identity that people rely upon to cope (Aten et al., 2019) and that undergoes significant changes during and following mass societal trauma (Henrich et al., 2019), effects which can have long-lasting and even inter-generational effects (Bentzen, 2019). However, the degree of the shift is unprecedented. For example, Bentzen (2020) noted that, by March, the number of Google searches of “prayer” had reached a record high for the 5 years for which relevant data are available, which greatly exceeds any explicitly religious event over that period. Rates correspond to the trajectory of the pandemic in different regions of the world, and the searches double for every 80,000 registered cases (Pirutinsky, Cherniak & Rosmarin, 2020).

As a Christian nation, Filipinos have strong faith in God and very religious as to almost all aspects of life, whether good or bad. This can be seen in the thriving religiosity of the Filipinos as part of their culture and tradition. This is also evident among the participants as they uttered and implied religious practices and divine intervention in their way of life. “Natanto ko na sa bawat problemang dumating sa ating buhay,

mayroon talagang solusyong katumbas. Pananalig sa Panginoon

ang katapat.” (I realized that for every problem that happened in

our life, there is always a solution for it. Just have faith in Him,”

underscored by Participant D when asked about the lessons that

she learned during this pandemic. “And remember always the

good values imparted and shared by the people behind your

back,” she concluded).

As to Participant C, she mentioned that life must go on despite the crisis and problems they encountered. It is a matter of having faith in Him.

“Ipagpatuloy lang ang buhay anumang problemang dumating o makakasagupa. Maging positibo lang ang palaging pananaw sa buhay. Hindi ito ibibigay ni Lord kung hindi natin kaya. Pananalig sa kanya ang kailangan para mapagtagumpayan ang lahat nang ito. (Life must go on in spite of the crisis and problem we encountered. Just be strong. Our Almighty will not gave these to us, if He knows, we can't make it. Just have faith in Him, participant C, said).

“Be strong in times of troubles. Have faith to Almighty. Remember that

a family that prays together, stays together,”

participant B responded on the

things that she learned during this pandemic. She added that her faith in God gives her positive vibes and would normally turn out to positive results.

On the other hand, Participant A underscored that we must strengthen our faith in the Lord. According to her, companies were bankrupt and closed and many people lost their jobs, lost their lives, and also lost their way because of this pandemic.

“This experiences we are having now is a manifestation that we need to strengthen our faith with Him. It is a lesson that we need to turn ourselves to Him because many have already turned their back on Him.”

The results of the study is consistent with the Filipino beliefs and culture as a Christian nation. Filipino Catholics have drawn strength from a wide variety of Catholic and Christian practices and

attitudes to help them manage daily the challenges and hardships. Based on Scripture and Church teachings, many Filipino Catholics dutifully attend mass and services so that they can incorporate virtues into their daily life (Gonzalez, 2009).

For the majority of Catholics, their religious faith encompasses a wealth of formal and informal options for seeking God's help, guidance, and miracles. Activities includes everything from private prayers to public processions. A connection to divine power may also be sought through amulets, pilgrimages, saints, and/or charismatic gatherings. Because many Filipino are raised as Catholics, many turn to faith-based ways to manage life's challenges. This cultural disposition is so ingrained that official church-sanctioned activities are not necessarily essential for keeping a practice of Catholicism alive.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Students of ISAT U-Dumangas Campus had experienced significant changes in their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic such as the hostile effects of home quarantine or simply staying at home due to lock downs. Their mental and psychological health have been challenged. On the other hand, they also discovered a lot of things about themselves such as their talents and skills during the pandemic while they stayed at home. Thus, the pandemic made them know themselves better.
2. The participants experienced level of anxiety and stress brought about by the pandemic. This was exacerbated by their online classes where they found it difficult to connect to the internet.
3. Time management seemed to be working with the participants in coping with the pandemic as well as their school requirements. They felt that they could make things better if they manage their time.
4. Being optimistic and have faith in God Almighty were the things they learned during the pandemic. These helped them get through the challenges and difficulties they experienced during pandemic.

References

[1] Ano, G. G., & Vasconcelles, E. B. (2005). Religious coping and psychological adjustment to stress: A meta-

analysis. *Journal of clinical psychology*, 61(4), 461-480.

- [2] Arlinghaus, K. R., & Johnston, C. A. (2019). The importance of creating habits and routine. *American journal of lifestyle medicine*, 13(2), 142-144.
- [3] Aten, J. D., Smith, W. R., Davis, E. B., Van Tongeren, D. R., Hook, J. N., Davis, D. E., ... & Hill, P. C. (2019). The psychological study of religion and spirituality in a disaster context: A systematic review. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 11(6), 597.
- [4] Baticulon, R. E., Sy, J. J., Alberto, N. R. I., Baron, M. B. C., Mabulay, R. E. C., Rizada, L. G. T., ... & Reyes, J. C. B. (2021). Barriers to online learning in the time of COVID-19: A national survey of medical students in the Philippines. *Medical science educator*, 31(2), 615-626.
- [5] Bentzen, J. (2019). Acts of God? Religiosity and natural disasters across subnational world districts. *The Economic Journal*, 129(622), 2295-2321.
- [6] Cao, W., Fang, Z., Hou, G., Han, M., Xu, X., Dong, J., & Zheng, J. (2020). The psychological impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on college students in China. *Psychiatry research*, 287, 112934.
- [7] Chan, Y. F., Leung, D. Y., Fong, D. Y., Leung, C. M., & Lee, A. M. (2010). Psychometric evaluation of the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale in a large community sample of adolescents in Hong Kong. *Quality of Life Research*, 19(6), 865-873.
- [8] Ciprandi, G., Schiavetti, I., Rindone, E., & Ricciardolo, F. L. (2015). The impact of anxiety and depression on outpatients with asthma. *Annals of allergy, asthma & immunology*, 115(5), 408-414.
- [9] Creswell J.W., (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed-Method Approaches*
- [10] de Oliveira Araújo, F. J., de Lima, L. S. A., Cidade, P. I. M., Nobre, C. B., & Neto, M. L. R. (2020). Impact of Sars-Cov-2 and its reverberation in global higher education and mental health. *Psychiatry research*, 288, 112977.

- [11] Delgado, P. (16 June 2020). Lessons from COVID-19 in the Education Sector. *Observatory: Institute for the future of education*. Retrieved August 20, 2021 from <https://observatory.tec.mx/edu-news/lessons-from-covid19-education>
- [12] Denovan, A., Dagnall, N., Dhingra, K., & Grogan, S. (2019). Evaluating the Perceived Stress Scale among UK university students: implications for stress measurement and management. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(1), 120-133.
- [13] Dong, L., & Bouey, J. (2020). Public mental health crisis during COVID-19 pandemic, China. *Emerging infectious diseases*, 26(7), 1616.
- [14] Duan, L., & Zhu, G. (2020). Psychological interventions for people affected by the COVID-19 epidemic. *The lancet psychiatry*, 7(4), 300-302.
- [15] Fancourt, D., Steptoe, A., & Bu, F. (2020). Trajectories of depression and anxiety during enforced isolation due to COVID-19: longitudinal analyses of 59,318 adults in the UK with and without diagnosed mental illness. *medRxiv*.
- [16] Folkman, S., Lazarus, R. S., Dunkel-Schetter, C., DeLongis, A., & Gruen, R. J. (2016). Dynamics of a stressful encounter: cognitive appraisal, coping, and encounter outcomes. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 50(5), 992.
- [17] Genç, E., & Arslan, G. (2021). Optimism and dispositional hope to promote college students' subjective well-being in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 5(2), 87-96.
- [18] Gonzalez, J. J. (2009). *Filipino American faith in action*. New York University Press.
- [19] Hamaideh, S. H., Al-Modallal, H., Tanash, M. A., & Hamdan-Mansour, A. (2021). Depression, anxiety and stress among undergraduate students during COVID-19 outbreak and "home-quarantine". *Nursing Open*.
- [20] Hatta, S. (2020). The psychological sequelae during mental health and COVID-19 pandemic: learning from the past for today's coping styles. *Med Health*, 15(1), 1-4.
- [21] Health Essentials. (25 September 2020). *Here's How the Coronavirus Pandemic Has Changed Our Lives*. Retrieved September 21, 2021 from <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/heres-how-the-coronavirus-pandemic-has-changed-our-lives/>
- [22] Henrich, J., Bauer, M., Cassar, A., Chytilová, J., & Purzycki, B. G. (2019). War increases religiosity. *Nature human behaviour*, 3(2), 129-135.
- [23] Holmes, E. A., O'Connor, R. C., Perry, V. H., Tracey, I., Wessely, S., Arseneault, L., ... & Bullmore, E. (2020). Multidisciplinary research priorities for the COVID-19 pandemic: a call for action for mental health science. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 7(6), 547-560.
- [24] Khanna, R. C., Cicinelli, M. V., Gilbert, S. S., Honavar, S. G., & Murthy, G. V. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic: Lessons learned and future directions. *Indian Journal of Ophthalmology*, 68(5), 703.
- [25] Koenig, H. G. (2018). *Religion and mental health: Research and clinical applications*. Academic Press.
- [26] Lai, J., Ma, S., Wang, Y., Cai, Z., Hu, J., Wei, N., ... & Hu, S. (2020). Factors associated with mental health outcomes among health care workers exposed to coronavirus disease 2019. *JAMA network open*, 3(3), e203976-e203976.
- [27] Li, W., Zhang, Y., Wang, J., Ozaki, A., Wang, Q., Chen, Y., & Jiang, Q. (2021). Association of home quarantine and mental health among teenagers in Wuhan, China, during the COVID-19 pandemic. *JAMA pediatrics*.
- [28] Makarowski, R., Piotrowski, A., Predoiu, R., Görner, K., Predoiu, A., Mitache, G., ... & Nikkhah-Farkhani, Z. (2020). Stress and coping during the COVID-19 pandemic among martial arts athletes—a cross-cultural study. *Archives of budo*, 16, 161-171.
- [29] Martin, J. M. (2010). Stigma and student mental health in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(3), 259-274.
- [30] McLeod, S. (2008). Case study method in psychology. Retrieved May 20, 2015 from

- <http://www.simplypsychology.org/case-study.html>.
- [31] Mertens, D.M.(2005). Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: integrating diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods.
- [32] Metzger, I. W., Cooper, S. M., Ritchwood, T. D., Onyekuru, C., & Griffin, C. B. (2017). Profiles of African American college students' alcohol use and sexual behaviors: associations with stress, racial discrimination, and social support. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 54(3), 374-385.
- [33] Nelson, B. W., Pettitt, A., Flannery, J. E., & Allen, N. B. (2020). Rapid assessment of psychological and epidemiological correlates of COVID-19 concern, financial strain, and health-related behavior change in a large online sample. *PLoS One*, 15(11), e0241990.
- [34] Pariat, L., Rynjah, A., Joplin, M., & Kharjana, M. (2014). Stress levels of college students: Interrelationship between stressors and coping strategies. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(8), 40-46.
- [35] Pirutinsky, S., Cherniak, A. D., & Rosmarin, D. H. (2020). COVID-19, mental health, and religious coping among American Orthodox Jews. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 59(5), 2288-2301.
- [36] Rajkumar, R. P. (2020). COVID-19 and mental health: A review of the existing literature. *Asian journal of psychiatry*, 52, 102066.
- [37] Sari, M., & Megayanti, T. (2021, February). Time Management During Covid-19 Pandemic. In *6th UPI International Conference on TVET 2020 (TVET 2020)* (pp. 36-39). Atlantis Press.
- [38] Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health: assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology*, 4(3), 219-247. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-6133.4.3.219>.
- [39] Shigemura, J., Ursano, R. J., Morganstein, J. C., Kurosawa, M., & Benedek, D. M. (2020). Public responses to the novel 2019 coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Japan: Mental health consequences and target populations. *Psychiatry and clinical neurosciences*, 74(4), 281.
- [40] Son, C., Hegde, S., Smith, A., Wang, X., & Sasangohar, F. (2020). Effects of COVID-19 on college students' mental health in the United States: Interview survey study. *Journal of medical internet research*, 22(9), e21279.
- [41] Stewart, B. L., Miertschin, S., & Goodson, C. (2020). COVID-19 Transitions to online formats and pre-pandemic foundations for student success: Time management and lifestyle variables. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 20(10), 173-189.
- [42] Sumbogo, T. A., Yunus, U., Pravita Wahyuningtyas, B., Willyarto, M. N., Rusgowanto, F. H., & Cahyanto, I. (2021). Time Management in Digital Activity of International Students during COVID-19. *Ilkogretim Online*, 20(4).
- [43] Wang, C., & Zhao, H. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on anxiety in Chinese university students. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 1168.
- [44] Wang, Guanghai, Yunting Zhang, Jin Zhao, Jun Zhang, and Fan Jiang. "Mitigate the effects of home confinement on children during the COVID-19 outbreak." *The Lancet* 395, no. 10228 (2020): 945-947.
- [45] WHO. World Health Organization. (2020). WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19. <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19%2D%2D11-march-2020>
- [46] Williams, L., Rollins, L., Young, D., Fleming, L., Greal, M., Janssen, X., ... & Flowers, P. (2021). What have we learned about positive changes experienced during COVID-19 lockdown? Evidence of the social patterning of change. *PLoS One*, 16(1), e0244873.
- [47] Woon, L. S. C., Sidi, H., Nik Jaafar, N. R., & Leong Bin Abdullah, M. F. I. (2020). Mental health status of university healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic: a post-movement lockdown assessment. *International journal of*

- environmental research and public health*, 17(24), 9155.
- [48] Wright, L., Steptoe, A., & Fancourt, D. (2020). Are we all in this together? Longitudinal assessment of cumulative adversities by socioeconomic position in the first 3 weeks of lockdown in the UK. *J Epidemiol Community Health*, 74(9), 683-688.
- [49] Xie, X., Xue, Q., Zhou, Y., Zhu, K., Liu, Q., Zhang, J., & Song, R. (2020). Mental health status among children in home confinement during the coronavirus disease 2019 outbreak in Hubei Province, China. *JAMA pediatrics*, 174(9), 898-900.
- [50] Zandifar, A., & Badrfam, R. (2020). Iranian mental health during the COVID-19 epidemic. *Asian journal of psychiatry*, 51.
- [51] Zhai, Y., & Du, X. (2020). Mental health care for international Chinese students affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. *The Lancet. Psychiatry*, 7(4), e22.