Students' wellbeing in online dance coursework amid pandemic

Abstract

The students online dance coursework performances are affected due to low family income. Thisstudy aims to understand the students' wellbeing in the new education setup amidst the pandemic. It useda descriptive qualitative research design ensuing the six steps: familiarizing with data, creating codes, theming, reviewing, defining, and naming and producing the final report by Clarke and Braun[1] thematic analysis of qualitative data interpretation. Anchored on the interview and focus group discussion using google meet recording. For the twenty-two student respondents in online dance coursework, the central theme identified is low family income which ripples the effect having four sub-themes identified based on the patterns of the responses. The following sub-themes derived are: (a) unreliable gadgets, (b) limited internet access, (c) overwhelming activities, and (d) emotionally distressed with sub-themes of the pandemic, family problems, environment, and due dates resulting in delayed to no submission of output. Listening to students' realities reveals that most of their families have low incomes, hampers them from attending an online dance class. And it creates a ripple effect on students' lives, be it in school activities, family, and personal responsibilities and concerns, leading to depression and stopping attending online classes. The teachers play a significant role in the well-being of the students by alleviating and motivating them to pursue their education amidst the challenges. From time to time, conduct and provide an accommodating, safe, non-judgmental and conducive for learning environment during informal talks about students' present situations. Then plan, organize, and provide alternative activities appropriate to students' context.

Keywords: covid 19 pandemic, low-income family, online dance coursework, wellbeing

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Introduction

Education is the top priority in the "Education 2030 Agenda". It designs a sustainable educationsystem despite challenges such as "conflict, social unrest and natural hazards" (UNESCO Education in Emergencies).[2] It only implies that even amidst of COVID-19[3] challenge finding ways to deliver instruction must be continued to ensure protection, safety, information dissemination and constantly improve the education process. Unfortunately, most countries are affected by the pandemic and unprepared to venture into this new education modality. Lagua[4] emphasized that the Philippines is not ready for the new normal procedure. But despite the issue, educators, parents, and government agencies Department of Education (DepEd) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) discuss an avenue to continue the education operation through an "online learning platform."

The "new normal" education demands the shift of teaching modalities in the implementation, which requires learning and embracing new teaching strategies, and utilizing online platforms requires a lot of preparation. Roesch[5] said that several schools and teachers are unprepared to adapt to the remote learning modality because of the unexpected and unplanned changes in the education process. Ithas been foreseen that a new education setup entails a lot of challenges because of a lack of preparedness and appropriate skills. Lagua[4] discloses that imposing "a full online learning platform" creates an issue because it requires equipping the entire support system: the administrators, staff, teachers, and students, for the implementation procedure. The transition takes time, but since the option is limited remote learning education is embraced. Still, the challenge now is the current status of students attending this modality, especially the marginalized are falling behind academically. Indeed, many suffer from theevent since it requires financial preparation and, at the same time,

a mindset for change. Fowler[6] emphasized that the distance learning modality affects students with a scarcity of resources across the country, leaving many students behind. They face many challenges like deprivation of quality education;in the same manner, they suffer from lack of food and unstable family conditions. The students' wellbeing is vulnerable in this time of pandemic. Therefore, it is significant to understand the students' wellbeing in online dance coursework for the teacher implementers to make a difference in alleviating the students' needs in the teaching and learning process.

Methodology materials and methods

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research method that beheld into the students' well-being inonline dance coursework in the new education set up to describe and understand the students' present situation amid the pandemic and what hampers their compliance with the coursework. Interview and focus group discussions were facilitated, and conversations through google meet were recorded with students' permission. They were asked about their coursework experiences, after which their narratives were encoded. The major and sub-themes were identified and coded employing Clarke and Braun's[1] thematic analysis method following the six steps of qualitative data interpretation: familiarizingwith data, creating codes, theming, reviewing, defining, and naming and producing the final report. Finally, the data was used to validate personal observations of the tertiary student respondents from interviews and focused group discussions in google meet recordings.

Findings and analysis

COVID-19 has highly affected the education system and transported challenging experiences to teacher-implementers and, in the same manner, to the clientele of instruction in online dance

coursework. It has been two years of learning through online implementation, which created a lot of realities in the students' wellbeing, from the interview and focused group discussion of the twenty-two tertiary student respondents. One central theme identified is low family income which created ripple effects of online learning modality having four sub-themes acknowledged based on the patterns of the responses. The following sub-themes derived are: (a) unreliable gadgets, (b) limited internet access, (c) overwhelming activities, and (d) emotionally distressed with sub-themes of the pandemic, family problems, environment, and due dates resulting in delayed to no submission of output.

Discussion

The "new normal" of education requires a sudden shift from a physical classroom to a full-online approach to learning. Unfortunately, the less fortunate students in terms of resources are the most affected by this online dance coursework because they need to produce video performance outputs as the requirements, which affects their wellbeing. The main theme is:

Low family income

The students came from low-income families earning less than ten thousand pesos a month with at least four to six family members. The pandemic has added to their suffering because their parents had no work, and the subsidy given by the government was not enough to suffice for the family's needs. The limited resources entail difficulty sustaining their education demands, especially spending a load on internet access as the primary medium in delivering the teaching and learning process. Parents' challenge is providing loads to their children by attending online classes because they must prioritize their basic needs. Here are some of the students' accounts:

i.   Ang 50 pesos nga akong ipaload ingon akong mama nga usa na kaadlaw namong konsumo." Student#19

(According to my mother, a 50 pesos load is already enough for a whole day of food consumption.)

ii. 200 akung gasto sa load sa usa ka bulan which is mag lisud sad ug provide akung parents tungod sa panahon karon." Student#6

(My parents can't provide 200 pesos load spent for one month because of the current situation.)

One of the major challenges of the students is attending online instruction modality's which is primary source of this endeavor because their budget for data purchases is insufficient. Poor students likely suffer in this new educational setup since the coursework requires file downloading and uploading, video accessing, and producing their video performance outputs. Philippine Statistics Authority[7] explained that the poverty incidence among Filipino families is 16.1 percent, as estimated in 2018. The income is below the poverty line. This scenario created a ripple effect on complying with the school activities and tasks, which exposed to unreliable gadgets, limited internet access, overwhelming activities, and emotionally distressed.

Unreliable gadgets

Remote instruction needs reliable gadgets as a medium for communication. Still, the low-capacity device runs slow in data access and cannot store big files and videos in downloading and uploading, which creates a problem in the process. In addition, most students were using cell phones because they could not afford laptops. Students said:

i.   It's hard for me to catch up all the paper works and projects especially if the teacher requires us to do works that need the used of internet access and download applications in the cell phone especially that most of our cell phone are already storage full." Student #22

ii. Slow internet connectivity and having no other resources like gadgets to use in doing my paper works and projects in school." Student#18

iii. We suffered the unstable of internet connection and its capacity to download or upload files and other like video's" Student#9

Students who lack sufficient resources settle for less in acquiring gadgets. Most of them come from remote areas, and they suffer from poor internet connection as well. According to Indian University,[8] there is a massive problem in the dependability and quality of technology the students own because of the family's socioeconomic status. Moreover, devices incompatible with the required internet storage capacity result in difficulty working the activities.

Limited internet access

Internet access varies from the location site. Students living in the remote barangays and even some parts of the city experience difficulty accessing signals. Another factor is the environmental condition that hinders access. The students express that:

i.   It is very difficult to access our internet connection here at our province because we are located in the dead spot place. In order to access internet connection, we will climb at the high mountains near the globe tower or go to our municipality were in there is also a high connectivity." Student#12

ii. Our internet connection is not stable when there's a heavy rainfall or a specific time because a lot of gadgets are connected." Student#17

iii. It was hard for me because our province does not have a good and stable internet connection and yet I am trying and doing my best to answer and pass the modules and activities." Student#2

Indeed, internet access is a significant obstacle in remote instruction because teaching and learning are impossible without it. Indian University[6] research acknowledges that 20% of the students have problems maintaining adequate access to internet connections because of a lack of dependable internet access. Yet day-to-day class work, assignments, and readings are online.

Overwhelming activities

Students are overwhelmed with all the requirements given by the teachers. The psychological and physiological needs of the student have affected students' performance behavior. The course requirement is one of the students who struggle to produce video performance output with due dates because it takes time to generate one, which results to stress. According to students:

i.   There are loads of activities given every week. The due dates of some activities are not flexible. It's hard to do our major subjects since they are performance-based."

Student#18

ii. We feel struggled in what to do first specially when there is activity which involves physical performances where it takes time for us to know these kind of activities."

Student #14

iii. Stressful, in a way, they're a lot of activities that should be done as early asstudents can." Student #8

Addressing all the tasks, most especially performance activities, requires time. Managing time is stressful since students lack information on how to do it and the limited resources are the contributing factors. So, learning how to mitigate the present student's context is considered to meet their current needs. For Daniel[9] and SPARK,[10] reassurance of students' well-being is more important than content, and learning, among others, is a priority.

Emotionally distressed

The students' difficulty in figuring out things results in mental sufferingcontributed by the pandemic, family problems, environment, and due dates. Here are the students' narratives:

Pandemic

The pandemic hinders the students from doing the usual activities compared to face-to-face class setup. They have less interaction with their classmates. They need to work alone and lose interest because of lack emotional support.

i. I don't have anybody to share my struggle during this pandemic. I'm not used to work only, I am into like being with schoolmates or friends." Student #9

ii. Due to the pandemic, sometimes I lost interest when talking about education." Student #20

Family problem

Another factor contributing to the students' emotional disturbance is a family problem because they drop their focus when their parents are arguing, and problems are always present in a day-to-day activity.

i. Hearing my parents arguing which gives me utmost discomfort and puts me in a bad mood especially when they argue over things that I find nonsense." Student #5

ii. I can't fully focus in studying and learning, as I have also problemsin our home. Unlike before, when going to school, the problems of thehouse and school was be separated." Student #20

Environment

The noise pollution at home and outside distracts students' mental health and mindset contributes to lack of attention.

i. I found it difficult to adjust as I kept getting distracted by my environment, noises from the neighbors shouting outside, some even blasting loud music, and the noises inside the house. Student #5

Due dates

Due dates frustrate the students because of their limitations and difficulty inmanaging their time in complying with all requirements considering their overall situation.

i. We feel frustrated at certain activity specially when there is a lot to do."

Student #14

ii. What concern me the most is the due date of the modules." Student #9"The due dates of some activities are not flexible." Student #18

iii. I suggest that there will be no specific due dates with the given activities ifit's many or needs a long duration to answer because

it's really difficult to manage time learning and answering together with our responsibilities." Student #17

Students' varied concerns overwhelm them, which results in confusion and unhappy life. Besides,they feel frustrated and depressed for other factors like poor internet connection; they are left behind, too much work, household chores, and family problems. According to the students:

i. I had experienced upon doing my paperwork and when it comes to having internet usage and connection is very poor and sometime lead me to my depression." Student #8

ii. There were times that I felt anxious knowing that I am already being left behind." Student #7

iii. Too much things to do, household chores plus problem in the family resultsto my anxiety and depression." Student #4

iv. No internet connection. Family Problem. Depression." Student #6

Suppose students' many concerns disturb their mental health; their present status affects their thinking ability to resolve their challenges, which isn't easy to fathom. Moreover, the lack of family resources to provide even basic needs is a major factor. Students cannot focus on learning the content because they are psychologically bothered by their realities. Attending online classes is a significant struggle for the students, even if they are very interested because finances hamper them. One of the students suggested:

i. Please conduct an emotional and physical checkup for all the students to know what they are feeling right now because I experienced a breakdown these past days," Student #11

As a result, some stopped attending classes because they were working to help their family needs,and some submitted their output late or, even worse, no submission. Few students were given grades, but most were given no grade (NG), implying that students have difficulty accomplishing their tasks dueto limited resources. However, they are given one year to comply with the coursework activities and ample time to find help as a matter of consideration. For Barrot[11] COVID-19 pandemic has affected students' mental health, precisely the quality of learning experiences. Richards & Valentine[12] remind all teachers to connect with students to let them understand the world's dimensions as partof their responsibilities. Hence, allowing students to express themselves makes them think aloud and share what they have in mind to understand their feelings. Clear,[13] in his newsletter on the web, "3-2-1: On eliminating clutter, reinventing yourself, and unity," cited Krzysztof Kieslowski, a film director. Screenwriter on unity, that "We all fear the same way and we all love in the same way." Puttingone's feet in the students' shoes is essential.[14] Building compassion for one's emotions creates a harmonious teacher-student relationship. The article "Why is student wellbeing important?" by SPARK[10] emphasizes that the wellbeing of the students is a vital element interconnected with academic performance. Some research has shown that happy students learn more efficiently. It is about the complete social, mental, physical, and emotional health endeavor. Hence it must be the school and teachers' priority while deliver instruction and everything else second. If one aspect is affected, the entirestudent being is threatened, so joy and satisfaction are tied with the current events in life. Even in the online environment, teachers can provide a comfortable, safe, non-judgmental, positive, and accommodating learning place and support students who are experiencing difficulty attending classes.[15] The truth is even if all their concerns are unanswered but understanding their plight makes a difference.

Conclusion

Listening is the beginning of understanding students' experiences, giving an accurate insight into their realities. Most of the students' families have low incomes and live in remote areas, which is the biggest challenge in this new education setup. The situation ripple effect on the different aspects of students' lives, be it in school activities, family, and personal responsibilities and concerns, leads to depression and late or no submission of output because they are working and no longer attend online classes. Most students were given no grade, and a few received grades in the coursework. Therefore, the teachers' role is vital in understanding students' reality and well-being as a significant responsibility. There is a need to plan, organize and provide alternative activities suited to students' context to alleviate and motivate them to pursue learning, especially in these challenging moments. Provide a conducive and accommodating online environment while conducting informal talks about students' present scenarios from time to time to unveil students' concerns and experiences.

Acknowledgments

Conflicts of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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