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Barriers Of Distance Learning Modality in The New Normal

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Abstract — The COVID-19 pandemic has brought remarkable changes in the entire humanity. Education suffered a tremendous transformation to cater the demand of the new normal. Distance learning modality was adapted to continue the school operation though; this modality is still under observation and needs to be studied. Accordingly, this study is sought to determine the barriers of distance learning modality in the new normal. A quantitative research design with the aid of the survey questionnaire is used in the study. It is concluded that barriers of distance learning modality do not affect the student's academic performance. However, the financial distress, lack of training and support, mental health difficulties, poor internet connectivity, limited technological tools, lack of skill on online learning platforms, mobility restrictions, community lockdowns, and power interruptions are alarming concerns of the students. Hence, the study recommends that the government shall provide assistance such as internet connectivity, gadgets and, other educational supplies for students' sustainable learning. In addition, the school through the guidance office will create a plan to counsel students who suffered stress and depression brought by the pandemic. They should initiate basic training-workshop about ICT to teach the students on how to properly utilize the online platforms (e.g. Facebook Messenger, Zoom, Google). Lastly, teachers must have to organize at least weekly meeting to monitor student's progress.

Keywords — COVID-19 Pandemic, Distance Learning, Barriers of Distance Learning, financial distress, and mental health difficulties

I. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected education and teacher education in particular, in various ways. As a result of the closure of universities and schools, teachers and students had to rapidly adapt to remote teaching. Carillo et al., (2020) said that, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted education at all levels. Institutions and teacher educators had to quickly respond to an unexpected and 'forced' transition from face-to-face to remote teaching. Philippine education system is adapting the new learning modality to resume its classes nationwide. Despite the calls for an academic freeze due to the corona virus outbreak, the government still believes that education should not be compromised. They are optimistic that distant learning will work in the Philippines (Uy, 2020). So, for the continuity of the educational operation the schools implemented the distance learning which refers to a learning delivery modality, where learning takes place

between the teacher and the learners who are geographically remote from each other during instruction. This distance learning modality has three types: Modular Distance Learning (MDL), Online Distance Learning (ODL), and TV/Radio-Based Instruction (Quinones, 2020).

Distance learning modality is seen as the most applicable modality and is accessible to all even to those students in the far-plunged areas. Learning through printed and digital modules emerged as the most preferred distance learning method of parents with children enrolled this academic year (Bernardo, 2020). Teachers' role had shifted from the old way to flexible way for it is no longer suitable in the new normal. Instead of tracking students' progress in the classroom, it will never be the same. It will be through email and other online channels. Likewise, learners may also contact teachers via e-mail, phone, text message, or instant messaging, among other methods because classes are no longer held face-to-face. This becomes a challenge in the part of parents, teachers, students, and even the local government officials because everybody should have to work hand in hand for the success of this new learning modality.

Boutsika et. Al., (2019) noted that distance learning modality is increasingly plays a critical role in education in developed and developing countries and consequently a significant role in social development and economic growth. The positive attributes of this mode are very evident. Keles et al (2016) pointed out several advantages of distance learning such as flexibility in learning, students may gain useful, transferable skills, such as planning and research, there is no waste of time in transport, learning is more associated with technology more than face-to-face, it can reach a wider audience and can equalize access to education, making information notes open to everyone yet minimizes the costs of stationery. However, it has barriers also that impede the learning of the students in terms of online, modular and blended learning modality.

According to Abuhammad (2020), there are technological barriers in distance learning which includes insufficient investment and maintenance, poor connectivity and lack of gadgets. Thus, the students experienced stress and depression and even discouraged which hampered them to continue working with their assignments, classes or exams. On the other hand, Talbert, (2020) added that this distance mode of teaching would hamper the learners to interact with peers, friends and to their teachers. Some empirical studies have revealed that students are suffering from stress and anxiety while working on their school related jobs during this pandemic (Arora, Chakraborty, Bhatia, & Mittal, 2020; Islam et al., 2020).

This distance learning modality is designed to ensure the safety of both the students and the teachers. But with the rushed adaptation and/or development of curricula and materials for this modality, gaps and even risks (especially for the physical materials to be passed on) are unavoidable realities. Maybe some of the colleges and universities are not prepared nor have the available resources to implement this modality. Consequently, officials from the government sectors are currently securing emergency plans and formulating proposals to alleviate the educational disturbances. Thus, the main aim of this study is to determine the barriers of the distance learning modality among the College of Education students of Jose Rizal Memorial State

University- Katipunan Campus, Katipunan Zamboanga del Norte. Moreover, the result of this study may serve as a springboard for the future improvements of the university's' existing programs and guidelines on the implementation of distance learning modality.

II. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design with the aid of the questionnaire checklist adapted from Abuhammad (2020) and Baticulon et, al. (2020) to determine the barriers of distance learning modality in the new normal. The instrument has two parts. The first part is to determine the demographic profile of the respondents such as age, gender, and address. This is used to determine the significant difference in the barriers of distance learning modality when analyzed according to profile. The second part of the instrument is the indicators of the barriers of distance learning modality, namely: personal, technical, logistical, financial, community, domestic, and institutional barriers. Voluntary response sampling via social media platforms (Facebook and Gmail) and face-to-face were the means in the gathering of the data. The questionnaires were filled up and completed by selected CED student of JRMSU-Katipunan Campus.

III. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Respondents' Profile in Terms of Age

	Students	Frequency	Percent
Valid	17 - 19 years old	7	8.9
	20 - 22 years old	63	79.7
	23 and above years old	9	11.4
	Total	79	100.0

Table 1 presents the respondent's profile in terms of age. It can be seen in the table that out of 79 (100%) a total number of students, most of them ranged from 20-22 years old with a percentage of 79.7. On the other hand, the least number of the respondents ranged from 17-19 years old with a percentage of 8.9. Thus, this implies that most of the respondents are aged 20-22.

Table 2. Respondents' Profile in Terms of Sex

	Students	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	17	21.5
	Female	62	78.5
	Total	79	100.0

Table 2 shows the respondent's profile in terms of sex. It is shown that out of 79 (100%) the total number of students, the majority were females with a percentage of 78.5, and the least number of the respondents were males with a percentage of 21.5. This indicates that most of the students from the College of education were females and there were only few male students enrolled in the college.

Table 3. Respondents' Profile in Terms of Address

Address		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Katipunan	33	41.8
	Pres. M.A. Roxas	20	25.3
	Manukan	17	21.5
	Jose Dalman	1	1.3
	Dipolog	3	3.8
	Others	5	6.3
	Total	79	100.0

Table 3 presents the respondent's profile in terms home address. It can be seen in the table that out of 6 municipalities, Katipunan has the greatest number of students with a percentage of 41.8. The municipality that has the least number of students with a percentage of 1.3 is Jose Dalman. This indicates that most of the students enrolled in the College of Education were from Katipunan since the school is located in this municipality and it is near to their place of residency. This is supported by the study of Polikoff, et.al, (2020), that students are likely to enroll in the school where it is near to their home.

Table 4. Personal Barriers

Personal Barriers	**Mean**	**SD**	**Description**
1. Lack of training support	3.56	±0.84	Agree
2. Lack of technical expertise	3.37	±0.74	Neither Agree or Disagree
3. Mental health difficulties	3.52	±1.04	Agree
4. Physical health issues	3.24	±0.94	Neither Agree or Disagree
Grand Mean	**3.42**	**±0.89**	**Agree**

Table 4 shows the personal barriers of the Distance Learning Modality. It can be seen in the table that out of 3.42 grand mean, the most agreed personal barrier is the lack of training support which has the mean of 3.56 while the least agreed personal barrier is on item number 4, the physical health issues which contain the mean of 3.24. This means that the most affected personal barrier is the lack of training support. This is supported by the claim of Morin, (2022) that many students rely on the structure and support of the in-person school to help them on track with assignments. Distance learning means students need to be more independent and responsible for their own learning. Families may be trying to help, but many are also trying to juggle work while their kids are learning at home. Once students get off track and miss a few assignments, it can feel daunting to try to catch up. They may just disengage instead. Many students are at home in unstable environments, are struggling with financial hardships, and are struggling with the lack of a normal

routine. In addition, Jessie S. Barrot (2021) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic had the greatest impact on the quality of the learning experience and the students' mental health.

Table 5. Technical Barriers

Technical Barriers	Mean	SD	Description
1. Lack of internet access or poor connectivity	4.16	±0.99	Agree
2. Lack of computer knowledge	3.28	±0.95	Neither Agree or Disagree
3. Limited technological tools	3.90	±0.84	Agree
4. Issues with the online learning platform	3.66	±0.77	Agree
Grand Mean	**3.75**	**±0.89**	**Agree**

Table 5 presents the Technical Barriers. As shown on the table out of 3.75 grand mean, the most agreed technical barrier is the lack of internet access or poor connectivity with the mean of 4.16, while the least agreed technical barrier is on item number 6, lack of computer knowledge which contains the mean of 3.28. This means that the most affected technical barrier is the lack of internet access or poor connectivity. This is supported by the study of Sawsan Abuhammad (2020), he said that there are technological barriers in distance learning which includes insufficient investment and maintenance and poor connectivity. Many of the parents' discussed the frequency with which their children were disconnected from the internet and could not proceed with their assignments, classes or exams. Eloksari (2020), also intensifies that poor internet connection and lack of digital device accessibility are still impeding distance learning as the pandemic continues. According to Education and Culture Ministry Data, 51% of early education to middle school students living in the outermost, border in disadvantage areas do not have a reliable internet connection. In addition, 27.8% of them said they had access to a laptop or computer but the devices were also unreliable.

Table 6. Logistical Barriers

Logistical Barriers	Mean	SD	Description
1. Difficulties in distance learning and lack of student preparation	3.94	±0.67	Agree
2. Dissatisfaction with distance learning modality	3.66	±0.77	Agree
3. My teachers lack of resources and skills necessary to our course online	2.65	±0.70	Neither Agree or Disagree
Grand Mean	**3.41**	**±0.71**	**Agree**

Table 6 presents Logistical Barriers. It shows that out of 3.41 grand mean, the most agreed logistical barrier is the difficulties in distance learning and lack of student preparation with the mean of 3.94, while the least agreed logistical barrier is on item number 11, my teacher's lack of resources and skills necessary to our course online, which contains the mean of 2.65. This means that the most affected logistical barrier is the difficulties in distance learning and lack of student preparation. Morin (2022), stated that making sure materials are accessible can be a major challenge, whether students are going online or picking up paper packets. If students are comfortable with the system you're using, they might avoid it. It takes time to establish norms and practices with the new system especially when it involves technology.

Table 7. Financial Barriers

Financial Barriers	Mean	SD	Description
1. Inability to buy technology	3.94	±0.87	Agree
2. Inability to pay for internet services	3.97	±0.91	Agree
3. Financial distress within the household	3.85	±0.83	Agree
Grand Mean	**3.92**	**±0.87**	**Agree**

Table 7 presents the Financial Barriers. As shown on the table, out of 3.92 grand mean, the most agreed financial barrier is the inability to pay for internet services with the mean of 3.97, while the least agreed financial barrier is on item number 14 which is the financial distress within the household which contains the mean of 3.85. This means that the most affected financial barrier is the inability to pay for internet services. In the midst of a pandemic, economic recession, and social unrest, your students' lives may have changed drastically since the day your school shut down. Many families are grappling with financial worries, illness, loss, homelessness and/or food insecurity, (Morin, 2020).

Table 8. Community Barriers

Community Barriers	Mean	SD	Description
1. Mobility restrictions due to community lockdown	3.81	±0.79	Agree
2. Power interruptions	3.58	±0.87	Agree
Grand Mean	**3.70**	**±0.83**	**Agree**

Table 8 presents the community barriers. As shown in the table, out of 3.70 grand mean, the most agreed community barrier is the mobility restrictions due to community lockdown having the mean of 3.81, while the least agreed community barrier is the power interruptions which contains the mean of 3.58. This means that the most affected community barrier is the mobility restrictions due to community lockdown. Mobility restrictions due to community lockdown include social distancing and the temporary physical closure of educational institutions. Educational Institutions had to adopt a digital approach to instruction and student learning, dramatically transitioning traditional in-person classroom instructions to predominantly distance learning where teaching is provided remotely on digital platforms, (Mensah, 2020).

Table 9. Domestic Barriers

Domestic Barriers	Mean	SD	Description
1. Limited space conducive for studying	3.85	±0.80	Agree
2. Need to fulfill responsibilities at home	4.09	±0.77	Agree
Grand Mean	**3.97**	**±0.79**	**Agree**

Table 9 presents the domestic barriers. It is shown in the table that out of the 3.97 grand mean, the most agreed domestic barrier is the need to fulfill responsibilities at home, having the mean of 4.09, while the least agreed domestic barrier is the limited space conducive for studying which contains the mean 3.85. Therefore, the most affected domestic barrier is the need to fulfill responsibilities at home. Yangchen C. Rinzin (2020), pointed out that more than one in three

students could not study at home as they were engaged in household chores during the pandemic. It is supported by the study of Zanon et al. (2018) they said that household chores may negatively affect development because, in addition to having little time for leisure, adolescents who perform household chores have their school performance affected, more frequently miss classes, and experience school failures, and have less time to do school work.

Table 10. Institutional Barriers

Institutional Barriers	Mean	SD	Description
1. Poor communication between learners and educators	3.95	±0.80	Agree
2. Limited opportunities to interact with peers	3.97	±0.75	Agree
Grand Mean	3.96	±0.77	Agree

Table 10 presents the institutional barriers. As shown on the table, out of 3.96 grand mean, the most agreed institutional barrier is the limited opportunities to interact with peers with the mean of 3.97, while the least agreed institutional barrier is the poor communication between learners and educators which contains the mean of 3.95. This means that the most affected institutional barrier is the limited opportunities to interact with peers. As Schneider et al (2021) noted, that the academic environment provides individuals with the opportunity to form and maintain friendships, acquire leadership skills, learn about conflict resolution and cooperation and develop positive self-concepts, in addition to enhancing academic achievement. All these lessons are learned through peer interaction. So, if the students are participating in online learning then, they will experience distinctly less peer interaction, potentially leading to poorer academic and social skills. This suggests that the lack of peer interaction in online education may not be so detrimental at all.

Table 11. Respondents' Academic Performance

GWA	SD	Description
1.50	±0.13	Very Good

The table 11 shows the General Weighted Average of the students in Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Social Studies. It means that the Academic Performance of the students with the GWA of 1.5 is very good and shows learning consistency despite the challenges faced in the New Normal. Thomas R. Guskey, (2020) stated that in schools required to give grades for the current term, even when not all students have adequate online access, grades are typically based on evidence of student learning gathered up to the time of school closure.

Table 12. Significant Difference on the Barriers of Distance Learning Modality When Analyzed According to Profile

Variables	Pearson Chi-square Value	$\rho - value$	Interpretation
Age * Grand Personal Barrier	8.532[a]	.665	Not Significant
Age * Grand Technical Barrier	19.996[a]	.029	Significant
Age * Grand Logistical Barrier	2.476[a]	.929	Not Significant
Age * Grand Financial Barrier	13.313[a]	.102	Not Significant
Age * Grand Community Barrier	2.583[a]	.859	Not Significant
Age * Grand Domestic Barrier	4.588[a]	.468	Not Significant
Age * Grand Institutional barrier	5.301[a]	.380	Not Significant
Age * Overall	69.131[a]	.308	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Personal Barrier	27.554[a]	.191	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Technical Barrier	18.089[a]	.582	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Logistical Barrier	8.927[a]	.836	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Financial Barrier	17.801[a]	.336	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Community Barrier	14.028[a]	.299	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Domestic Barrier	6.476[a]	.774	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Institutional Barrier	13.212[a]	.212	Not Significant
Sex * Overall	128.323[a]	.475	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Personal Barrier	68.954[a]	.098	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Technical Barrier	53.838[a]	.330	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Logistical Barrier	30.464[a]	.687	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Financial Barrier	53.729[a]	.072	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Community Barrier	43.080[a]	.048	Significant
Sex * Grand Domestic Barrier	24.714[a]	.478	Not Significant
Sex * Grand Institutional Barrier	20.331[a]	.729	Not Significant
Sex * Overall	306.614[a]	.695	Not Significant

Presented in table 12 the significant difference on the barriers of distance learning modality when data are grouped according to profile. Result shows statistically no significance in almost all the respondents' profile specifically on age, sex and address except for sex and TB (Technical Barriers) and address and CB (Community Barriers). The latter suggests failure of the rejection of the null hypothesis since p values are greater than 0.05 (level of significance). This means that there is no significant difference among the variables. Thus, no association between the variables. Furthermore, as to sex and Technical Barriers and address and Community Barriers, it shows significant differences. This suggests on the rejection of the null hypothesis that asserts that there is no significant difference on the barriers of distance learning modality when data are grouped according to profile. This implies that there exist an association among the barriers of distance learning modality when analyzed according to respondents' profile. It means that respondent barriers of distance learning modality (technical barriers and community barriers) depend on the sex and address respectively.

Table 13. The significant relationship between the barriers and the academic performance of the student?

Variables	Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient	$\rho - value$	Interpretation
GWA * Grand Personal Barrier	0.183	0.107	Not Significant
GWA * Grand Technical Barrier	0.084	0.463	Not Significant
GWA * Grand Logistical Barrier	0.054	0.637	Not Significant
GWA * Grand Financial Barrier	0.093	0.413	Not Significant
GWA * Grand Community Barrier	-0.011	0.925	Not Significant
GWA * Grand Domestic Barrier	0.065	0.569	Not Significant
GWA * Grand Institutional Barrier	0.087	0.445	Not Significant
GWA * Overall	0.145	0.309	Not Significant

A Spearman's rank-order correlation was run to determine the relationship between barriers of distance learning and the academic performance of the student. There was a very weak, positive correlation between the overall barriers and the academic performance of the respondents, which was statistically not significant (r_s (79) = 0.145, p = .309). This means that there is a very weak association between the barriers of distance learning and academic performance.

IV. Conclusion

The study concluded that personal, technical, logistical, financial, community, domestic, and institutional barriers of Distance learning modality do not affect the student's academic performance. However, the financial distress, lack of training and support, mental health difficulties, poor internet connectivity, limited technological tools, lack of skill on online learning platforms, mobility restrictions, community lockdowns, and power interruptions issues really disturbed them in pursuing their studies.

Yet, the study recommends that the government shall provide educational assistance such as strong internet connectivity, gadgets and, other educational supplies for students' sustainable learning. In addition, the school through the guidance office will create a plan to counsel students who suffered stress and depression because of the pandemic. Schools should also initiate basic training-workshop about ICT to teach the students how to use online platforms properly such as Facebook Messenger, Gmail, Zoom, Google Meet, and Google Classroom. Teachers must have to organize at least twice a week online meetings to maintain close interaction with the students.

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