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# Filipino Students Experiences in Online Learning: A Meta-Synthesis

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**Abstract:** *This study presented a meta-synthesis of Filipino students' experiences in Online Learning. It utilized 15 out of 1090 studies from 2021 to 2022 that were screened through inclusion and exclusion criteria. The studies were organized using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) 2020 flow diagram and were quality-checked using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist for systematic review. Clark and Braunes' six-step thematic analysis was done and has emerged seven themes: mental and emotional barrier, social interaction barrier, lack of availability of gadgets and intermittent internet connections, lack of financial support, attention span and academic performances, and parental involvement in an online class. Students' experiences in online learning emerged as the meta-theme of the study. Filipino students' experiences in online learning opened up new avenues for new ways of learning but a lack of resources and training makes it difficult for them to learn. It is recommended that students should join a free online symposium that tackles various coping mechanisms amidst distance learning. Academic Institutions must provide adaptive learning systems and the Philippine Government must address the issues and concerns in distance learning.*

**Keywords:** *meta-synthesis, student's experiences, online learning, Systematic Review, Philippines*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a significant social necessity that serves as a foundation for a prosperous future and a key to individual freedom. Bhardwaj (2016) This is an essential factor in a person's life because having a successful future opens up many opportunities. For as long as we have been here, philosophers, the state, and those in positions of authority have emphasized its significance. All the progress present today, would not have been possible without education. Thus, making humans lifelong learners. However, the world took a step back when an infectious virus called the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which made its first appearance in Southeast Asia in February 2020, spread across the globe. Jobs and schools were immediately closed for two years. The economy and population both declined dramatically. The primary cause is a sharp decline in government investment. Many private-sector businesses have been forced to close or downsize their operations, resulting in job losses. Despite the rapid decline, people looked for ways to continue to prosper and fight the pandemic. As a response to the needs of the learners, institutions have implemented policies to continue learning.

Singapore has faced online learning positively. Although the country has almost 90% of its citizens have internet access, the Education Minister continued to emphasize the difficulties associated with the unexpected shift from face-to-face to virtual classes, noting that some households do not have internet connectivity. Luckily, their government has been providing them with the resources they need, such as devices and internet access to continue learning.

To ensure learning continuity, the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has used alternative learning modalities that involve technology and internet service. People had many opinions about the solution because it was clear that they lacked the resources to implement it. For example, through an online campaign based on faculty and student sentiments, student politicians from multiple colleges urged CHED to authorize the withdrawal of online classes, stating that "while we understand the need for learning to continue, the different circumstances of students across universities are not ideal and conducive for such." The pleaders contend that "access to the internet connection and learning devices continues to be a privilege up to this day, placing those with poor internet access at a disadvantage when it comes to online classes." To give you a better picture, 45% of Filipino citizens (46 million) and 74% (34,500) of students in public schools do not have internet access (Jones, 2019). However, DepEd and CHED still pushed through with the solution and are used to this day. Though online learning is a great solution to the problems caused by COVID-19, there is not much to say about student learning, especially since it reduces experiential learning. This drastic change may or may not be beneficial to the student's learning needs. Many students do not have consistent internet access; others do not even have adequate electronic devices, let alone the necessary technical skills. As a result, the goal of this meta-synthesis is to establish the effectiveness and experiences of online learning among Filipino students.

### A. Research Objective

This systematic review aims to know the experiences of Filipino students in online learning using a meta-synthesis method. Additionally, we would like to identify all the possible challenges that Filipino students encounter while having online learning.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Design

In the study, meta-synthesis was applied in order to synthesize data on students' online learning experiences in the Philippines. In connection with this paper, online learning, experiences, and challenges of the Filipino students will be reviewed by utilizing qualitative data. By doing it, relevant data will be drawn upon to help build a stronger foundation relating to online learning while addressing the concerns of the students.

### B. Search Strategy

Key terms found in the Publish or Perish Software database via Google Scholar are online learning, students, and the Philippines and there were nine hundred eighty-two related studies found. Concurrently, in the Scopus database the keywords used are still online learning, students, and the Philippines, and found one hundred eight related studies. From 2021 to 2022, all studies pertinent to online learning for Filipino students were retrieved and examined. The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Systematic Review checklist was used to screen remaining studies. These words were specifically chosen to collect information from Google Scholar and Scopus in order to compile variables required for the meta-synthesis. The retrieved data was organized using a PRISMA 2020 flow diagram.

### C. Selection/Inclusion Criteria

All reported studies met the set of criteria: articles must involve online learning in the Philippines, be focused on students' online learning experiences, be 2021-2022 studies, and meet the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist.

### D. Data Analysis

Thematic data analysis was used in identifying essential or recurrent themes. The findings were organized thematically. Thematic analysis used Clarke and Braune (2017) protocol to analyze the selected data. Thematic analysis, according to Caulfield, is a method for detecting, evaluating, and incorporating various themes throughout qualitative data. Six phases are involved in thematic analysis: familiarization, developing initial ideas, searching for articles, evaluating topics, specifying and labeling portions, finally creating a result.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data is perceived in accordance with the study's purpose based on a meta-synthesis of the selected research. The meta-theme was defined as students' online learning experiences. As a result of the meta-theme, seven themes emerged, namely, mental and emotional barrier, social interaction barrier, lack of availability of gadgets and intermittent internet connection, communication barrier, lack of financial support, attention span and academic performance, parental involvement in online class

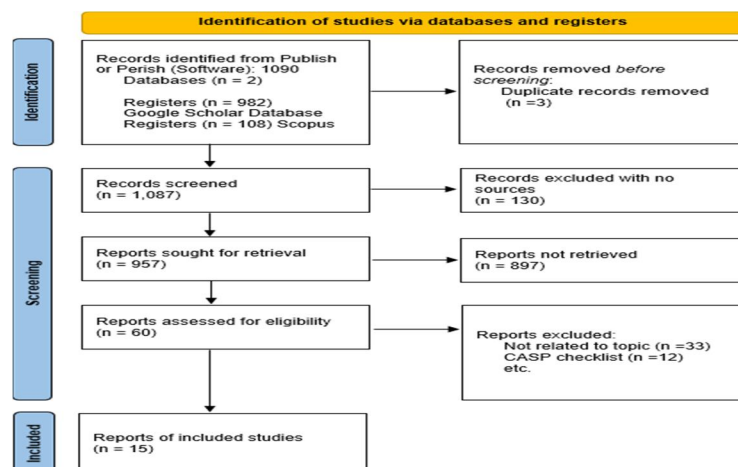


Figure 1. Identification of studies via databases and registers using PRISMA

In research paper selection, there were three (3) stages using the PRISMA Flow Diagram. Identification, Screening, and Included are the three stages. During the identification stage, 982 research were published in Google Scholar and 108 studies were published in the Scopus database, totaling One Thousand Ninety (1090) studies on the initial screening utilizing the Publish or Perish software. Due to duplication of studies in Google Scholar and Scopus, three (3) research were deleted, leaving 1,087 studies in the identification stage. The screening stage had three sub-stages. One hundred thirty (130) studies were eliminated from the first phase due to a lack of sources, resulting in one thousand eighty-seven (1,087) papers. In the second stage, eight hundred thirty-four (834) studies have been eliminated because the citation did not fulfill the researcher's specifications, thirty (30) studies were eliminated because there was no URL, eighteen (18) studies were eliminated because they could not be accessed, and fifteen (15) studies were eliminated because the authors were unknown, resulting in sixty (60) studies. Thirty-three (33) studies were omitted from the third substage because they were unrelated to the topic, and twelve (12) studies were also removed since they did not meet the requirements using the CASP checklists, which resulted in fifteen (15) studies on the screening stage's final substage.

In the meta-synthesis, 15 studies were considered which are focusing on students' online learning experiences were used to determine Filipino students' online learning experiences. In table 1, it shows the studies focusing on the experiences of students in online learning included in the qualitative meta-synthesis. It also shows the authors, year, setting of the study, the publication type, the design of the study and the students' experiences in online learning based on each study.

Table 1. Studies focusing on students' experiences in online learning as part of the qualitative meta-synthesis

No.	Authors	Year	Setting	Publication Type	Design	Students' Experiences in Online Learning
S1	JS Barrot, II Llenares, LS Del Rosario	2021	Philippines	Article	Mixed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of student interaction</li> <li>● Inadequate communication and a scarcity of ICT resources</li> <li>● The anxieties and mental health issues of the students.</li> <li>● Financial difficulties of the students.</li> <li>● Lack of fieldwork and laboratories.</li> </ul>
S2	AJ Dianito, J Espinosa, J Duran	2021	Philippines	Published	Quali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Miscommunication between situations.</li> <li>● Social Exclusion</li> <li>● Limitation of Assistive technology and internet connection.</li> <li>● Social and Financial issues.</li> <li>● Susceptibility to cognitive and mental health issues.</li> </ul>
S3	R Alibudbud	2021	Philippines	Article	Quali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Limited financial capacity.</li> <li>● Limited capacity to obtain necessary gadgets.</li> <li>● Increases anxiety.</li> <li>● Digital divide originated from socioeconomic inequalities.</li> </ul>
S4	RM Oducado, H Estoque	2021	Philippines	Article	Mixed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Online learning proved to be stressful.</li> <li>● Poor to fair academic performance.</li> </ul>



S5	JN Guillasper, RMF Oducado,GP Soriano	2021	Philippines	Article	Quanti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The COVID-19 outbreak impacted nursing students' Quality of Life.</li> </ul>
S6	JV Cleofas	2021	Philippines	Article	Mixed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarantine-related barriers of the students</li> <li>Practicing self-care despite the barriers</li> </ul>
S7	DJ Lemay, P Bazelais, T Doleck	2021	Philippines	Article	Quanti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased stress and anxiety.</li> <li>Students reported difficulty concentrating.</li> <li>Isolation and social distancing pose social and affective challenges.</li> </ul>
S8	JMR Asio, E Gadia, E	2021	Philippines	Article	Quanti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internet connection is a great challenge of online learning among students.</li> </ul>
	Abarintos , D Paguio...					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning Device Availability of College Students.</li> </ul>
S9	J Santos,LF De Jesus, RR Sealmoy ...	2021	Philippines	Article	Mixed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The lack of reliable internet connection</li> <li>The lack of necessary equipment.</li> <li>Limited communication and teacher and student interaction.</li> <li>Technological challenges and limited technical capacity students have.</li> </ul>
S10	GD Anzaldo	2021	Philippines	Article	Quali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most students do their modules for formality purposes only and just to simply comply with their requirements.</li> <li>Students are not the ones making their school tasks but it's their parents.</li> <li>Students' modules are not supported and guided by their parents.</li> </ul>
S11	E Rotas,M Cahapay	2021	Philippines	Article	Quali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A stable internet connection is required, and marginalized families cope by seeking decent space and time.</li> <li>Some students cope by borrowing educational resources.</li> <li>Students are likely to feel uneasy with teachers' expectations.</li> </ul>

S12	AD Talosa, BS Javier, EL Dirain	2021	Philippines	Article	Quali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Self-regulated learners believe that flexible learning that focuses on making them self-responsible and self-directing in their learning choices will result in opportunities.</li> <li>● Students are affected in terms of communication and interaction.</li> <li>● Difficulties in managing time and balancing personal time.</li> <li>● Lack of familiarity with relevant online tools, a lack of internet access, and operational problems were also issues in online learning.</li> <li>● Environmental factors sometimes affect their learning.</li> <li>● Teacher factors are also a difficulty when it comes to real-time feedback and delivery of learning.</li> </ul>
S13	M Aristeidou, S Cross	2021	Philippines	Article	Quanti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students had difficulty managing their workload and had little interaction with their peers.</li> <li>● Distance learning impacted their life and mental health negatively.</li> </ul>
S14	RE Baticulon, JJ Sy, NRI Alberto, MBC Baron	2021	Philippines	Article	Mixed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Medical students' difficulty adjusting to learning styles</li> <li>● Unsatisfactory communication between teachers and students</li> <li>● Insufficient physical environment for studying and mental health issues</li> </ul>
S15	A Funa, F Talaue	2021	Philippines	Article	Quanti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inadequate access to supportive resources.</li> <li>● Students encountered slow broadband connections as well as time limitations.</li> </ul>

There are 15 studies counted in the final set; these include (14) published articles and (1) book. The data was gathered and analyzed using qualitative (5), quantitative (5), and mixed methods (5). One meta-theme and seven themes emerged from the fifteen (15) publications.

#### A. Theme 1: Mental and Emotional Barrier

According to Fawaz and Samaha (2020), college students are more likely to suffer from depression and stress as a result of psychological challenges, learning conditions, future uncertainties, afraid of infectious disease, reports about an insufficiency of safety equipment, tiredness caused by lockdown, disappointments, as well as an absence of freedom, and fears caused by rumors and false information in the media. College students who took part in studies done during the COVID-19 lockdown reported a negative impact on their mental wellbeing and feelings.

In general, the COVID-19 outbreak has increased students' stress, anxiety, and depression (Aslan et al., 2020). Emotionally negative reactions such as rage, confusion, anguish, agony, disgust, fear, or unease are among those associated with it. It is also associated with significant emotional trauma, delayed stress disorder, and signs of depression among students. (Brooks et al., 2020) Notwithstanding the earlier studies concentrating on negative emotions According to (Aslan et al., 2020), future research on students' psychological health must include positive emotions to determine the extent to which these reduce as a result of the pandemic situation. Positive emotions have been shown to aid in the preservation and improvement of human mental health; thus, measuring them throughout a public health emergency is crucial (Yamaguchi et al., 2020). Encouraging social interaction and connection will benefit students' mental health both during and after the epidemic, according to (Holen et al., 2018).

#### *B. Theme 2: Social Interaction Barrier*

Academic social interactions frequently enhance students' sense of belonging., and if they don't feel like they belong, they may be less motivated to complete their academic work (Yeager et al. 2013). According to recent research, students are generally isolated during the pandemic and lack of in-person social interactions can significantly increase students' stress levels (Dumitrache et al. 2021; Son et al). It is commonly assumed that an apparent lack of academic social relationships in an online learning environment exacerbates students' learning and self-regulation challenges. This is because the absence of continuous engagement with students and superiors in an online learning can be a source of stress for students and affect their academic performance (Chaturvedi et al. 2021; Yeager et al. 2013). Students who have fewer educational conversations portray their lives being more impacted as a result of the epidemic, which is consistent with other recent studies indicating the problems of social detachment on students' lifestyles and well-being (e.g., C. Liu et al. 2021; Lukács 2021). Similarly, Rodriguez-Besteiro et al. (2021) state that due to academic delays and financial difficulties, college students are among the most communities affected by the global epidemic. Furthermore, during the pandemic, significantly reduced social connections may be associated with a generally poorer adjustment to this unpleasant condition, particularly among younger students, who have greater difficulties coping with pandemic-induced stress, according to Babicka-Wirkus et al. (2021).

#### *C. Theme 3: The Lack of Availability of gadgets and Intermittent Internet Connection*

According to Fabito et al. (2020), reliable internet connection was one of the obstacles faced by students in online learning. Similarly, Casillano (2019) stated that there is only a few portion of students who have full access to the internet making it hard for some to access the platform for electronic learning. Furthermore, according to (Cleofas & Rocha, 2021), students who have limited internet access and do not own laptops or personal computers are at a much greater disadvantage. However, according to Jin and Sabio (2018), using mobile devices for online learning is likely to be an advantage as this can facilitate learning. Furthermore, according to (Estira, 2020), the more device types a student owns, the higher the level of learning preparedness. A survey discovered that students are equipped for online classes: However, computer and rental internet cafes still exist but are costly. (Yra et al., 2020). Furthermore, a survey revealed that students were ready for online lessons; yet, the cost of computer and internet rentals in cafes exists. Another survey found that smartphones are popular among students and have become one of the apex tools for educational institutions to use (Al Tameemy, 2017). However, in the local environment, some kids still do not have access to these devices. This becomes a burden or a struggle for individuals, especially when it comes to learning (Cleofas & Rocha, 2021; Yra et al., 2020).

#### *D. Theme 4: Communication Barrier*

The utilization of technology-based data and communication to transmit content in a variety of ways facilitates online learning. Whether this is with visual and auditory components in order to make learning attentive and appealing (Rusu et al 2021), communication only occurs via phone, video calls, or teleconference (Zoom meeting) during online learning, according to Anggraini et al., (2022). However, the abrupt change in communication style has forced pupils to face issues in lowering their communication and social connection with their professors and friends. (Aboagye et al., 2020) Furthermore, online learning assists students in creating virtual communities in which they participate in collaborative learning through communication. (Vircaet al., 2021). According to one study, assertive students who are enrolled in online learning or courses can have a detrimental effect on some other pupils' skills and opportunity to engage and interact since assertive pupils may be uninformed of their very own interpersonal communication, tends to result in pretty accurate in classroom discussion by other students. (McClisaac and Tug, 2002) As a result, feedback improves educational communication by increasing student and teacher satisfaction. Electronic learning, on the other hand, should offer a wide range of technological services that enable students to actively express themselves as well as communicate in a collaborative context (Popa et al., 2021).

#### *E. Theme 5: Lack of Financial Support*

COVID-19 increased several students' financial challenges, negatively impacting their online learning experience. The principal reasons for these financial consequences is that students can afford to pay for their online course and also as a consequence since their parents do not have jobs. Also, it is really difficult for students to pay for the high cost of having internet connectivity. In an attempt to counteract the development of COVID-19, academic facilities shifted from face-to-face interactions to mostly online learning modalities, exacerbating these consequences (Malolos et al., 2021). Whereas all learners could be effected, children from lower socioeconomic situations are more likely to experience emotional discomfort due to a lack of monetary capacity to acquire necessary technology and internet connection. Given these factors, a digital divide caused by socioeconomic inequities can lead to mental health disparities among students during the epidemic (Cleofas and Rocha, 2021). Adequate recognition is essential to guarantee adequate assistance and security for all individuals with disabilities (Smith-Khan et al., 2015). During the epidemic, the majority of participants encountered social and economical challenges. Some of them stated that they had difficulty obtaining support from their peer groups (Barrot et al., 2021). In addition, students have financial difficulties as a result of flexible learning because the internet is expensive in the Philippines and gadgets are pricey. As a result, it is suggested that they improve technological access for educational delivery. (Aban et al., 2022)

#### *F. Theme 6: Attention Span and Academic Performance*

Multitasking is one of the benefits of technology improvements; as a result, students can easily access information at one's convenience (B. B. K. King, 2020; May, 2020). According to (Paul & Jefferson, 2019), flexibility and time efficiency have become viable as a result of these demands and opportunities.

According to (Cicekci & Sadik, 2019), despite the possibilities afforded by technology, students still find it difficult to keep their concentration on the content presented to them. According to the May (2020) study, a shorter attention span and a lower level of focus have a stronger impact on online learning.

However, according to (B. B. K. King, 2020), various factors impact student outcomes in online classrooms, and having access to the internet anywhere at the moment jeopardizes a student's focus and concentration. The overflow of information exhausts the student and forces them to redirect their attention elsewhere (May, 2020). Learners are required to be able to multitask since classes are videotaped and distributed, planned activities are offered, and texts are delivered by the university or given instructor (B. B. K. King, 2020).

According to (Deng & Wu, 2018), Frequent feedback from students improves the efficacy of online learning. Students are called out at random during online sessions to be evaluated by the teacher to ascertain whether their attention is focused towards the learning experience or if they have been disturbed by environmental factors, or if there is live video feed, the teacher notices the pupils' facial expressions and body language. direction.

Furthermore, (Cicekci & Sadik, 2019) said that a student's attention span is an important component in distance learning; if the student is constantly chastised by the instructor for not listening nor listening attentively, the discussion will be disrupted and the time allotted would be wasted.

#### *G. Theme 7: Parent Involvement in Online Class*

According to (Song et al., 2020), during the COVID-19 epidemic, most countries restricted school operations and shifted the instructional procedure to a virtual system for learning at their respective family residences.

Parent's involvement in a child's learning is one of the consequences in children's educational process due to a sudden shift of old fashion instruction to a virtual instruction without having to modify the curriculum or the educational philosophy. (Knopik & Oszwa, 2019). In certain situations, parents were required to commit additional time to their children's education (Carpenter & Dunn, 2021) particularly to kids with exceptional needs (Brandenburg et al., 2020), Parent participation in children's education, according to (Szumski & Karwowski, 2017), may be characterized broadly as purposeful attempts to help them in the education process while taking into consideration their intellectual, affective, interpersonal, and character growth.

#### *H. Meta-theme: Students' Experiences in Online Learning*

Online learning is an educational environment utilized on the Web as well as other digital equipment and resources to facilitate online and offline teaching processes as well as educational program administration (Usher & Barak, 2020; Huang, 2019).

According to Copeland et al. (2021), the worldwide epidemic harmed students' emotional and behavioral functioning, particularly focus and projecting difficulties (i.e., emotion and wellbeing conduct) caused by solitude, financial implications, and difficulties.



Furthermore, according to Yazon and Callo, all learners require equity in terms of the availability of technology that supports student learning; however, the digital gap is widening due to students' limited opportunities in economic hardship, even those in rural areas.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Students' experiences with online learning in the Philippines opened up new avenues for new ways of learning. However, a lack of resources and training makes it difficult for students to learn. As a result, it is recommended that students should join a free online symposium that tackles various coping mechanisms amidst distance learning. Academic Institutions must provide adaptable learning systems and Government institutions must address the issues and concerns in distance learning.

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