

Attitudinal Readiness of Grade 7 Teachers and Learners Towards Online Distance Learning During COVID-19 Pandemic

Nerissa A. Mesa
Ray Jayson Lacanilao
Mahabang Parang National High School
nerissa.mesa001@deped.gov.ph

Abstract: This research sought to examine teachers and learners attitudinal readiness toward online distance learning system during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, it forced the shutdown of educational institutions, which adversely affected learners' community. Since it is contagious nature, COVID-19 demanded containment and enforced isolation that tremendously affected personal interaction of teachers and learners. Hence, online distance learning has emerged as closest substitute for off-line teaching. It is then empirical to examine teachers and learners' attitudinal readiness towards online distance learning.

Keywords: *Online Distance Learning, COVID-19 Pandemic, Attitudinal Readiness, SLM*

Introduction

Novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a new coronavirus discovered in December 2019 (WHO, 2020). The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 was declared to be a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization (WHO), due to the unexpected and alarming continuous rising numbers of confirmed cases worldwide (WHO, 2020) thus, has become a global health crisis. As of October 6, 2020, almost 36 million people have been infected and over one million have died. Along with the rest of the world's countries, Philippines was affected by this outbreak, which translates into almost 325,000 infected and 6,000 deaths (Worldometer, 2020). To curb the spread of COVID-19, most governments have opted to employ quarantine protocols and temporarily shut down their educational institutions. As a consequence, more than a billion learners have been affected worldwide. Among this number are over 28 million Filipino learners across academic levels who have to stay at home and comply with the Philippine government's quarantine measures (UNESCO, 2020).

As the Philippine's Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary, Leonor Briones quipped, "Education must continue even in times of crisis whether it may be a calamity, disaster, emergency, quarantine, or even war" (Department of Education, 2020). To respond to the needs of learners, especially of the 27.7 million, students enrolled for school year 2021 which covers both public and private schools (Reference: Education/Philippine Statistics Authority, 26 Oct 2020) our country implemented proactive policies for the continuance of education despite the

closure. These policies include modified forms of online learning that aim to facilitate student learning activities. Online learning might be in terms of synchronous, real-time lectures and time-based outcomes assessments, or asynchronous, delayed-time activities, like pre-recorded video lectures and time-independent assessments. (PSA, 2020).

The integration of self-learning modules (SLMs) with the alternative learning delivery modalities (modular, television-based, radio-based instruction, blended, and online) will help the DepEd ensure that all learners have access to quality basic education for SY 2020-2021 since face-to-face classes are still prohibited due to the public health situation. The SLMs and other alternative learning delivery modalities are in place to address the needs, situations, and resources of each and every learner and will cover all the bases in ensuring that basic education will be accessible amid the present crisis posed by COVID-19," DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones said. SLMs are delivered in printed format to schools that are located in coastal areas, far-flung provinces, and communities with limited to no access to the internet or electricity. For households with gadgets and devices, the Department has announced that SLMs can also be accessed online or offline (DepEd, 2020). The DepEd released DepEd Order No. 7 s. 2020 titled, "School Calendar and Activities for School Year 2020-2021." It contains enclosures, one of which is the printable Learner Enrolment and Survey Form (English and Filipino) and with School Consolidation for School Year 2020-2021 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the result of survey gathered from LESF conducted by Mahabang Parang National High

School, more than half of the total population of parents who answered the survey form preferred online distance learning. As a response to the survey, MPNHS has resorted to online distance learning, which combines both synchronous and asynchronous activities. For students who cannot participate in online learning, they utilize the SLMs.

The reasons of this acceptability of using online distance learning are the ease of use, learning flexibility and controllable environment. However, despite its multiple advantages, there are quite a few limitations of online distance learning such as social isolation, face-to-face interaction between teacher and student, connectivity issues, etc. Remote learning has never been adapted and accepted as real learning or the formal mode of education before this pandemic that compelled the world to electronic learning solution. Now, at the hour of pandemic crisis, most of the educational institutions are exploring and approaching towards online distance learning to make it easy for students to work out at new normal. Also, various e-teaching software are being explored by teachers or educators to bring maximum possible ease to their students. As a matter of fact, with this e-learning wave development, teachers as well as students are in the process of adapting this new teaching and learning methodology. At this prevailing situation of virtual teaching and setting of new normal of teaching-learning methodology, it becomes more important to get to know the opinion of teachers and learners and to explore their inclination towards online distance learning.

The shift to emergency remote teaching during the lockdown imposed during the pandemic has a global impact on educational system as well as on the psychological health of students and faculty members (Readiness Towards Emergency Shifting to Remote Learning During COVID – 19 Pandemic Among University Instructors (Reference journal) Samiah Alqabbani, et al., 2020 ; [Ahmady et al., 2020](#); [Odriozola-González et al., 2020](#); [Sahu, 2020](#) (online sources) Against such a backdrop, this study aims to examine the attitudinal readiness of teachers and learners towards online distance learning during COVID-19 lockdown period.

COVID-19 is the greatest challenge that educational systems have ever coped with (Daniel, 2020). Many governments required from educational institutions to switch, almost overnight, to online teaching and distance education. Recent figures (UNESCO 2020b) suggest that country-wide school closings have been incited in more than 191 countries

worldwide, as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. These decisions affected 91.3% of student population, enrolling almost 1.5 billion of students worldwide (Drane et al., 2020). As many countries have switched to online education, UNESCO (2020b) developed 10 key recommendations to ensure that learning remains undisturbed during the COVID-19 crisis.

In the recent time, the research on exploring students' perception and their expectation from e-learning has been on surge (Biswas, 2020). National Center for Education Statistics has reported the growing requirement of e-learning due to its increasing acceptance recently. Several studies indicate that most of the students enrolled in online courses are satisfied with the mode of learning. However, studies also reveal that perceptions of learners are affected by a host of factors (Mandal, 2019). Factors such as age, gender, prior knowledge of computer literacy and learning styles of individual are the vital predictors of technology acceptance by students. There exists ample literature which discusses the theories of "technology acceptance" to study students' perception of (Salloum, 2020). learning.

Relevant literature is consulted to find the possible answers particularly in the area of users' perception towards innovation. "Theory of diffusion of innovations" (Rogers, 2019) is so far is one of the most relevant theories used for the study of technology adoption in higher education. Roger has defined users' perception of innovation immensely affects its adoption by them. The perception of relative advantage, the degree to which the innovation is perceived as better one than the compared product, compatibility, consistency with current value set up, past behavior and experience of innovation recipients, the extent of complexities associated in understanding and making use of innovation. As per "Technology Acceptance Model," two most important determining factors for technology acceptance are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Bentler, 2020). The study investigated the relationships among course structure/organization, learner interaction, student engagement, and instructor presence on student satisfaction and perceived learning in the online learning environments. This study indicated a significant relationship between course structure and perceived student learning. Furthermore, the data indicated that student interaction does not have a statistically significant impact on student satisfaction yet instructor presence does have a statistically significant impact on perceived student learning. The data, however, indicated that learner interaction does significantly impact perceived student learning. The data also indicated that instructor presence does

influence student satisfaction. The mediated variable, student engagement, partially mediated the impact that instructor presence has on student satisfaction. Furthermore, student engagement fully mediated the impact of both instructor presence and learner interaction on perceived student learning (Gray, 2016).

Online learning is still new, and it is continuously evolving by the rapidly changing technologies. More efforts are required by all online educators to integrate pedagogy with technologies in order to enhance student learning. In nutshell, online discourse as a communication activity could be very beneficial in current online learning environment to the students or learners, by providing a space for information exchange and to generate deeper thinking, but only if educators understand how it would work and how students learn in the online environment (Zhu,2018). This survey-based research study examined the perception of students on various engagement strategies used in online courses. Learner-to-instructor engagement strategies seemed to be most valued among the three categories of student engagement. Icebreaker/introduction discussions and working collaboratively by using online communication tools were rated the most beneficial engagement strategies in the learner-to-learner category, whereas sending regular announcements or email reminders and providing grading rubrics for all assignments were rated most beneficial in learner-to-instructor category. Thus, we can conclude that student engagement increases student satisfaction, enhances student motivation to learn, reduces the sense of isolation, and improves student performance in the online learning environment. The results of the study have implications for online instructors, instructional designers, and administrators who wish to enhance engagement in the online courses (Martin,2018). This research study was conducted to investigate the perception of academic stress experienced by students during current online education and coping strategies using emotional intelligence adopted by them. The findings of the study indicated that significant differences were observed between the fear of academic failure and online and home environment among male and female students. Many of them have started diverting themselves to various creative activities and taking up online courses that are helping them to learn new technical skills. Thus, by using emotional intelligence and distancing from boredom and depressive thoughts, students were trying to cope with negative effects arising from the current pandemic situation in this new environment of online education (Chandra,2020).

Theoretical Framework

This research was anchored on the study of Khan et al. (2021) in Students' Perception towards E-Learning during COVID – 19 Pandemic, where he stated, "the educational system across the world has immensely been affected due to outbreak of COVID-19; it forced the shutdown of educational institutions, which adversely affected student fraternity across the globe. Due to its contagious nature, COVID-19 demanded containment and enforced isolation that tremendously affected personal interaction of teachers and students. In the absence of traditional classroom teaching and one-to-one interaction, computer-based learning has emerged as closest substitute for off-line teaching."

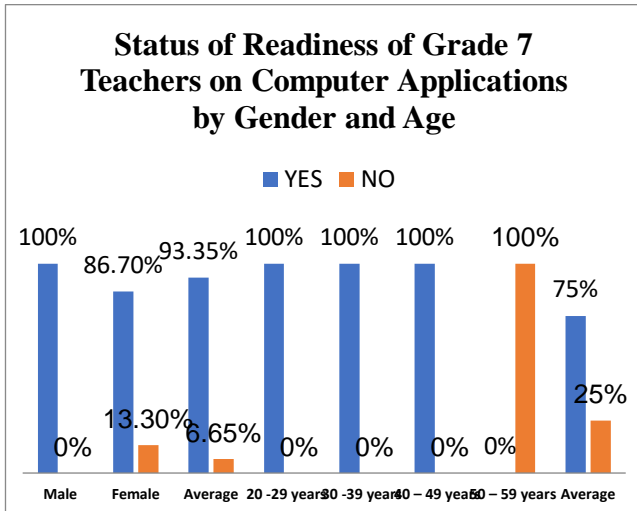
Methodology

The study was conducted during the first quarter of school year 2020-2021. A total of 27 Grade 7 teachers and 116 Grade 7 learners in Mahabang Parang National High School were the respondents of the study. The study used non-probability sampling technique specifically, purposive sampling. Survey questionnaires were developed. Questionnaires were used for the data collection. Administration of questionnaires was done after the validation of the experts. The questionnaires consisted of two sections: Section A collects personal information of teachers and learners while Section B gauges the attitudinal readiness of teachers and learners towards online distance learning. The respondents answered the questionnaire via Google form.

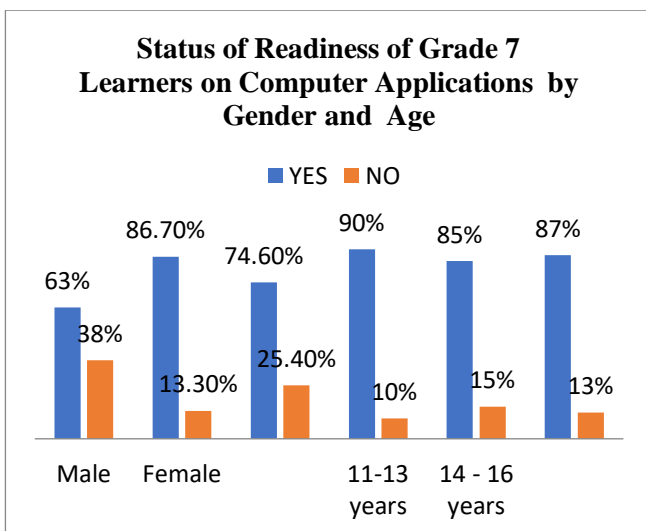
This study followed the strict ethical guidelines provided by DepEd Order No. 43, s. 2015 or Revised Guidelines for the Basic Education Research Fund (BERF). In order to ensure an ethical approach, participants were informed about the objective of the study and were required to provide consent prior to participating in the research project. The participants were advised of the purpose of the research, what is required in terms of completing the survey including the time commitment and the details around data protection and participant anonymity. The participants were notified that there would be no risks posed either physical or psychological and that they have the right to withdraw or exit the survey at any point prior to completing the survey. The participants were informed that the data are being obtained for research purposes and possible publication for academic purposes. It was further explained that the purpose of the data collection including demographic data, is for analysis at the group rather than the

individual level. No personal identifying information will be collected including the email addresses, as Google Form allowed a functionality to switch off email address collection. Thus, the respondents' right to privacy was maintained and confidentiality of their information was maintained throughout the process.

Body/Findings



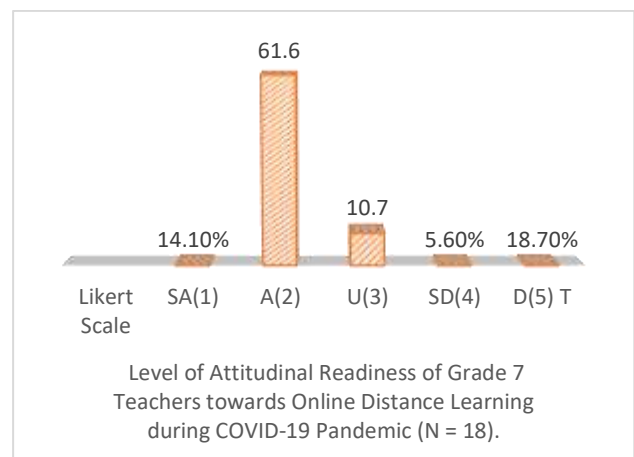
It can further be seen from the graph that 86.7% of the female respondents have knowledge on using computer applications while 100% from male respondents claim the same. Furthermore, 100% of respondents aged 20 – 49 have knowledge on using computer applications while 100% of the respondents aged 50 – 59 have no knowledge any of them. The high percentage rate on the status of using computer applications means that a great number of Grade 7 teachers are computer literate, possessed computer skills which make them more confident in using emerging technology.



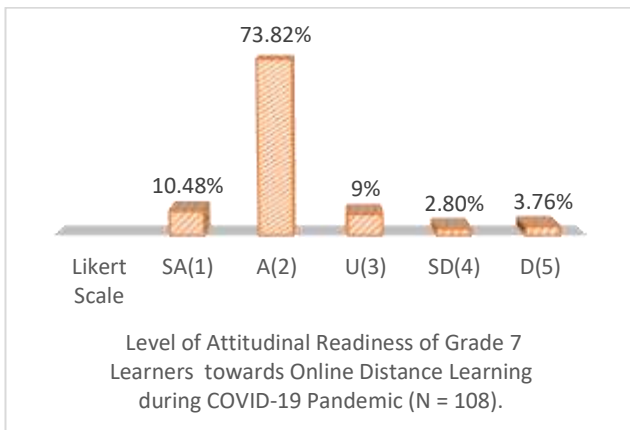
It can further be seen from the graph that 86.7% of the female respondents have knowledge on using computer applications whereas 62.5% of male respondents claim the same. Furthermore, 90.2% of respondents aged 11 -13 have knowledge on using computer applications as well as those respondents aged 14-16 with 84.6% answered the same. However, there is an average of 12.6% who show no knowledge on using computer applications.

The high percent rate on the status of using computer applications means that a great number of grade 7 teachers and learners are computer literate, possessed computer skills which make them feel more confident in using emerging technology. Hence, it is a manifestation that they are ready to accept challenges in using this various computer applications in the conduct of online distance learning especially during this time of pandemic. Although a small number of male and female teacher- and learner-respondents answered, “no” with regard to their status of readiness on the use of computer applications, it is also important to know the reasons for their response. In the questionnaire, the researchers should have included choices pertaining to the reasons why respondents answered, “no.”

Attitudinal Readiness. The study investigates the level of attitudinal readiness of teachers who are teaching online distance learning and learners who are enrolled to online distance learning. To measure the level of readiness of Grade 7 teachers and learners towards online distance learning during COVID – 19 Pandemic, questions listed in Table 3 were asked using a five-point Likert Scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” are clubbed together to form one positive response of “Agree.” The same procedure is applied in case of “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” and they are combined to get one response from the sample respondents which is “Disagree.” “Undecided” was left as it is. The results are shown in Tables 1 and 2.



The respondents have indicated their attitudinal readiness towards online distance learning and their own capability to make use of e-learning platform. The graph shows that 61.6% of respondents agreed that they like the idea of online distance learning whereas 14.1% strongly agree. Additionally, 18.7% of the respondents disagree while 5.6% strongly disagree. On the other hand, 10.7% of the teacher-respondents were undecided. Thus, most of the teachers were ready, comfortable and confident with the use of online distance learning resources.



The respondents have indicated their attitudinal readiness towards online distance learning and their own capability to make use of e-learning platform. The graph shows that 73.82% of respondents agreed that they like the idea of online distance learning whereas 10.48% strongly agree. Additionally, 3.76% of the respondents disagree while 2.8% strongly disagree. On the other hand, 9% of the respondents were undecided. Thus, most of the learners were ready, comfortable and confident with the use of online distance learning.

Conclusions

The main finding of this study is that online distance learning was perceived to be useful. This usefulness includes students being able to study from their homes without necessarily relocating. This ability to study from anywhere becomes an advantage online distance learning provides over face-to-face learning because this is not possible in traditional face-to-face learning. This research further showed that students believe that when studying through online distance learning, there is the chance to experience substantially similar or an alternative means of being educated, as done in the physical classroom setting. For example, possibility to have live lectures via synchronous tools and being able to get immediate feedback to questions just as is done in the traditional classroom setting by the help of technological advancement. It is also

discovered in this research that online distance learning platform and tools are perceived to be easy to use. The study further concludes that students have very good ability to make use of the various tools and technologies that enable one to participate in online distance learning with ease. Without the technological knowledge it becomes a hindrance for the students to easily participate in online distance learning. This study, therefore, showed that most students have strong technological background that will enable them to easily make use of the online distance learning that can enhance their e-learning experience without much hindrance. Varied attitudes towards online distance learning have been displayed in this study. These includes students liking the idea of online distance learning and also considering it to be an innovative concept which needs to be encouraged and enhanced.

Recommendations

Since this research focused on examining the attitudinal readiness of Grade 7 teachers and learners only of Mahabang Parang National High School, therefore, it will not be appropriate to conclude, based on the research findings, that the perceptions and opinions expressed cover views of all the student body in the school. Furthermore, the findings of the study will facilitate educational institutions and policy makers to take this online-learning process to the next level in a better way. In order to further explore some of the findings of this study, the researchers suggest the following studies to be done: a. What are the perceptions of school heads towards online distance learning? b. What are the preparations of educational institutions to welcome expected shift from classroom learning to online distance learning? Necessary measures should be adapted to improve the quality of online distance learning to help with better learning of teachers and learners during the phase of Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, webinars and virtual trainings on utilization of various computer applications and online platforms during INSET and LAC sessions can be conducted to increase teachers and learners satisfactions in using online distance learning.

References

- Armstrong, D. (2011). *Students' perceptions of online learning and instructional tools: a qualitative study of undergraduate students use of online tools. Turk. Online J. Educ. Technol.* 10, 222
- Bali, S.; Liu, M. (2018). *Students' perceptions toward online learning and face-to-face learning courses. J.Phys. Conf. Ser.* 1108, 012094.

- Biswas, B.; Roy, S.K.; Roy, F. (2020). *Students perception of mobile learning during COVID 19 in Bangladesh: University Student Perspective. Aquademia, 4, ep20023.*
- Henderson, D., Woodcock, H., & Mehta, J. (2020). *Keep calm and carry on learning: using microsoft teams to deliver a medical education programme during the COVID-19 pandemic. Future Healthc. J., 7, e67.*
- Mahajan, M.V. (2018). *A study of students perception about e-learning. Indian J. Clin. Anat. Physiol.,*
- Muzaffar, A.W., Tahir, M., & Anwar, M.W. (2020). *Systematic Review of Online Exams Solutions in E-learning: Techniques, Tools, and Global Adoption. arXiv, arXiv:2010.07086.*
- Nassoura, A.B. (2020). *Measuring Students' Perceptions of online learning in higher education. Int. J. Sci. Technol. Res., 9, 1965–1970.*
- Pérez-Pérez, M., Serrano-Bedia, A.M., & García-Piqueres, G. (2020). *An analysis of factors affecting students' perceptions of learning outcomes with Moodle. J. Furth. High. Educ. 44, 1114–1129.*
- Zayabalaradjane, Z. (2020). *COVID-19: Strategies for online engagement of remote learners, 9, 246.*