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Flexible Learning in Higher Education Institution: Experiences of Instructors in a Private Higher Institution

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords **—** face-to-face, hybrid, assessment methods, flexible learning, new normal, mixed-methods, Philippines

This research investigates instructors' experiences at Agusan del Sur College concerning Flexible Learning in the New Normal. The study adopts a mixed-method approach integrating quantitative and qualitative components. Participants are 30 full-time instructors across nine departments. The findings reveal that instructors need more training and technical competencies to conduct online courses, affecting the effectiveness of hybrid classes. Technical problems, including slow internet connections and unannounced power interruptions, despite these challenges, instructors value the flexibility inherent in Flexible Learning, spanning modalities, assessment methods, and instructional delivery, promoting greater student responsibility and time management, ultimately enhancing engagement and attentiveness. Moreover, smartphones and mobile applications serve as prevalent educational tools and eLearning resources, and there remains a preference for face-to-face classes over online learning. The study also underscores the positive

impact of Flexible Learning, encompassing synchronous and asynchronous platforms, in enhancing digital and technological competencies, with 45.4% of students and 48.8% of instructors reporting its benefits. Additionally, instructors with 0-5 years of teaching experience exhibit excellent proficiency in Flexible Learning modalities and assessment methods. In conclusion, this research suggests that Flexible Learning could constitute a sustainable mode of delivery in higher education institutions, contingent on instructors receiving adequate training and support to navigate the challenges the New Normal poses effectively.

INTRODUCTION

To ensure teaching and learning continuity, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the globe should embrace some changes in the systems and operations. One of the most adopted learning modalities in this new education system is the Flexible Learning Environment (FLE). The Flexible Learning Modality of instruction has grown in prominence and importance to ensure learning continuity and minimize class interruptions in the new normal (Czerniewicx et al., 2020). In the Worldwide scenario, HEIs have begun to adopt flexible learning with synchronous or asynchronous classes (Ali, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Starr et al., 2020). Commission on Higher Education (CHED) mentioned that flexible learning ensures continuity of inclusive and accessible education when using traditional modes of teaching is not feasible, as in the occurrence of national emergencies.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has become a structuring and transversal document to address the population's needs in all societies, emphasizing that "no one is left behind." In 2015, UNESCO, with UNICEF and other partners, during the World Education Forum, drew within the Incheon Declaration a framework for implementing quality education accessible to all as a goal to reach by 2030. In contrast, access to education should be equal and affordable to all ages and all levels of education, including the University level. It also identifies that the number of adults with relevant skills for employability must increase. Other highlighted aspects are the importance of eliminating the disparity of gender in education, as well as the ease of access to all people with handicaps or in vulnerable situations (Declaration, 2015). The percentage of adults proficient in ICT and Digital Literacies is a key indicator for determining the quality of education. Uddin et al. (2019) described open distance learning (ODL) as follows: it provided flexible educational opportunities in terms of access and multiple modes of knowledge acquisition; flexibility was reflected in the availability of choices for educational endeavors anywhere, anytime, and anyhow; access was about opportunities made available to all, freeing learners

from constraints of time and place; and with the facilitation of advanced ICT and other digital technology, multiple modes have enabled the use of various education delivery systems and learning resources.

Flexible learning pathways (FLP): FLP can support broader participation in higher education, better responsiveness to diverse student needs, reduced dropout rates, labor market (re-)entry, and career progression (UNESCO, 2022). Across 75 countries reporting relevant data, 55 have established a national policy for FLP, while 45 have relevant regulations and legislation (UNESCO, 2022). Allen and Seaman (2014) reported a trend of online learning in the United States higher education institutions with the following questions—(1) Is online learning strategic? (2) Are learning outcomes online comparable to face-to-face? (3) How many students are learning online? and (4) What is the future of online learning? National qualifications frameworks (NQF): At least 116 countries have an NQF addressing higher education, with most certified or referenced NQFs in Europe (INQAAHE Global Study 2018-2020). Integrated NQFs covering several or all education levels are key to developing flexible learning pathways, as they show the linkages between different types of qualifications (UNESCO, 2022). The Education 2030 Agenda defines flexible learning pathways as stronger links between formal and non-formal structures, entry points and re-entry points at all ages and educational levels, and recognition, validation, and accreditation of the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education (Martin & Godonoga, 2020).

In Southeast Asia, Countries like Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam have adopted Flexible learning to cater to the needs of the students. There are common challenges of flexible learning experiences in Higher Education: Technology, Motivation, Engagement, and Assessment. In 2021, the implementation of flexible learning in all parts of the world started during the hit of COVID-19 and still exists in the New Normal. The usage of flexible learning around the globe in 2021. In China, over 280 million students enrolled in online courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. In India, the government launched the National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR) in 2021, which aims to provide all students with access to high-quality digital education. In the United States, the number of students enrolled in online courses increased by 10% between 2020 and 2021. In Africa, the African Virtual University (AVU) provides online courses and degrees to students in over 30 countries. The growth of internet-based technologies has altered the academic environment and helped colleges and universities undergo a digital transition. Thakur (2015) mentioned that knowledge about the technology is important.

Moreover, the way teachers integrate technology has the potential to bring about viable changes in the educational process (Chen et al., 2019; Henriksen et al., 2018; Leema & Saleem, 2017; Mishra & Mehta, 2017; Waller et al., 2019). Ding and Zeng (2015) cited that flexible learning programs helped students to improve their academic performance and to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In Cambodia, Kaing (2022) emphasized that the Hybrid Teaching and Learning Environment (HTLE) positively affects 21st-century learning skills. It needs to apply technology effectively to develop self-directed learners positively. Further, Chet et al. (2022), 81.4% of undergraduate students did not propose to continue online learning during the post-COVID pandemic. Digital teaching and learning practices became the new normal in 2021, highlighting how offerings that started as temporary stop-gap solutions became routine. Universities used the second pandemic year to rethink, redesign, and improve digitized teaching and learning formats.

Agusan del Sur College Inc. is one of the HEIs in the Caraga Region that opted to adopt the CHED Memorandum No. 4, series 2020, which provided Guidelines on the Implementation of Flexible Learning. This research investigates instructors' experiences delivering Flexible Learning, its challenges and opportunities, and its impact on their learners. A study by Ulanday et al. (2021) found that teachers in HEIs in the Philippines had positive experiences with Flexible Learning. However, they also identified challenges like more training, support, and better access to technology resources. Agusan del Sur College Inc. is one of the HEIs in the Caraga Region that opted to adopt the CHED Memorandum No. 4, series 2020, which provided Guidelines on the Implementation of Flexible Learning. This research investigates instructors' experiences delivering Flexible Learning, its challenges and opportunities, and its impact on their learners. A study by Ulanday et al. (2021) found that teachers in HEIs in the Philippines had positive experiences with Flexible Learning. However, they also identified challenges like more training, support, and better access to technology resources.

Another study by Gaba et al. (2021) found that teachers in HEIs in India were also generally satisfied with their experiences with Flexible Learning. Implementing Flexible Learning in higher education institutions (HEIs) in the New Normal is essential for some reason. First, the New Normal signifies uncertainty and unpredictability. Second, the New Normal provided opportunities through a growing demand for lifelong Learning. Third, the New Normal provides a growing emphasis on equity and inclusion. HEIs must be able to provide all students with vast opportunities regardless of their background or circumstances. Flexible Learning allows HEIs to do this by enabling students to

learn in a way best suited to their needs (Müller et al., 2023).

Albert Bandura developed this theory in the 1970s, based on the idea that people can regulate their education. Bandura argued that self-regulated learners provide learning opportunities in their own pacing and time element. To bridge the gap, most studies on flexible learning have focused on student outcomes, such as academic achievement and satisfaction. However, there is a need for more research on flexible focus on the experiences of the instructors. A lack of research on the implementation of flexible learning focusing on Instructor's challenges and opportunities. There is a global need to understand educators' and schools' readiness for distance education and modernize teacher education to meet the needs of a knowledge-based global society. In times of crisis, it has also become important to increase teachers' applications in using CCT for pedagogy, digital literacy, and data assessment to enable more individualized learning (UNESCO, 2011). This research contributes significance in the field of Higher Education Institutions in Enhanced knowledge of flexible Learning's potential and challenges. By looking at the instructors' experiences, we can better grasp the opportunities and difficulties they encounter when delivering flexible Learning. HEIs provide opportunities for assisting teachers and enhancing the standard of flexible learning programs. We can find the best practices for teaching in a relaxed learning environment by researching the experiences of effective teachers. Other teachers can use this knowledge to help them improve their work.

By examining instructors' experiences, we can gather insights to create unique teaching and learning techniques especially suited for a flexible learning environment. We can better understand the needs of marginalized students and create support plans for them by researching the instructors' experiences.

FRAMEWORK

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National qualifications frameworks (NQFs) have been cornerstones of recent education reforms in countries worldwide. Often, NQFs have been prompted by the development of regional qualifications frameworks, examples being the European Qualifications Framework in Europe, the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework in Asia, the Pacific Qualifications Framework, and the sub-regional qualifications framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). UNESCO defines a Qualifications Framework as a thorough set of regulations that specify the level, workload, quality, learning objectives, and characteristics of every officially recognized higher education qualification. It ought to be easily understood with distinct descriptors for every certification that addresses its breadth (competencies linked to learning objectives) and its depth (level). It is arranged vertically by level and horizontally to encompass all qualifications granted within a system. Its goals are to make it easier to (a) create curricula and study programs, (b) allow students and graduates to move around, and (b) recognize study times and credentials (Martin & Godonoga, 2020).

A consensus was reached in the Incheon Declaration on the key components of the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which offers direction for putting Education 2030 into practice. The framework was deliberated during WEF 2015. The Education 2030 Framework for Action was completed by the Drafting Group and was approved by 184 Member States and the education community on November 4, 2015, during a high-level meeting held at UNESCO in Paris. The Framework for Action describes how to put the promise made at Incheon into reality at the national, regional, and international levels. Its goal is to mobilize all nations and partners around the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on education and its targets. It also makes recommendations for how to implement, coordinate, finance, and oversee Education 2030 to guarantee that everyone has access to high-quality, inclusive education and opportunities for lifelong learning. Additionally, it offers sample tactics that other nations may find useful in creating contextualized plans and strategies that respect their national policies and priorities while accounting for the various national realities, capacities, and levels of development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to (1) determine the perception of teachers in Flexible Learning, (2) identify the specific challenges and opportunities that teachers face in delivering flexible learning, (3) determine the impact of flexible learning on student learning and outcomes, and (4) identify the significant relationship between instructors' experiences and flexible learning delivery instructions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized the mixed method, qualitative and quantitative, to study teachers' experiences in flexible learning in higher education institutions in some ways—a quantitative survey using Google Forms. The researcher used a qualitative interview to collect data on teachers' experiences of teaching in a flexible learning environment, including the challenges and opportunities they face and the strategies they use to be successful.

Research Site

The study is conducted in Agusan del Sur College Inc., Bayugan City, Caraga Region, Philippines. ADSCO Inc. is one of the private HEIs in Bayugan City catering to the needs of Bayugan and the province of Agusan del Sur. It is located in the heart of Bayugan City. ADSCO Incorporated has Basic Education Offerings from Kindergarten to Senior High School, three-year TESDA courses and College courses such as Bachelor of Arts major in English, Bachelor of Elementary Education, Bachelor of Secondary Education, Major in English and Math, Bachelor of Custom Administration, Bachelor of Science in Criminology, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, major in Financial Management, Operations Management, and Marketing Management, and Bachelor of Hospitality Management. ADSCO is the No 7 Top University in Caraga Region According to Webometrics" Ranking of World Universities" July 2023 Edition by Cyber Metrics Lab.

Participants

There are 98 total population of College Instructors, of whom 66 are part-timers and 32 are Full-Time Instructors. The researcher considered the full-time instructors and applied the Cochran Calculator to determine the study's respondents. Participants in this study were 30 full-time instructors in Agusan del Sur College Inc. HEIs. All participants were highly qualified in terms of academic backgrounds and teaching experience. Respondents are conveniently and purposively chosen whose experiences range from 0 to 10 years. The 30 full-time participants have experienced teaching synchronous, asynchronous, and blended modality since the pandemic and in the new standard era. It is a convenient method to consider the access or willingness to participate or their availability or giving time as study respondents. They responded to the online survey through Google Forms after the end of the Academic Year 2022.

Instrumentation

A researcher-made survey questionnaire was utilized. On which the statements are benchmarked from related literature and studies. The questionnaire ran into a digital version through Google Forms. The survey questionnaires were validated in terms of content and congruency by four experts/professors specializing in research, education, and language. Three of them were doctorate holders, and one is pursuing her doctorate degree in their respective fields. The pilot testing was done on the instructors who were not part of the respondents. A Google Form link for the survey questionnaire was sent to the participants at the end of the Academic Year 2021.

Data collection

The data collection methods employed in the study on teachers' experiences in flexible learning include interviews, surveys, focus groups, and classroom observations. Descriptive statistics can summarize the data and identify outliers. To identify relationships between variables, such as the relationship between teacher workload and job satisfaction or the relationship between the type of flexible delivery instruction and the challenges teachers face using Correlation Analysis. The study was employed ethically. Participants informed consent and privacy protection and confidentiality, following RA 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 30 respondents responded to the survey, all of whom are part of the dedicated teaching force at Agusan del Sur College, Incorporated. These respondents teach AB, BEED, BSED, BS Criminology, BSHM, Diploma Courses, BSCA, BSBA, and Basic Education courses. Their instructional roles encompass various subjects, from General Elective to Minor and Major classes. Notably, most of these educators, accounting for approximately 77%, are relatively new to teaching. In contrast, the remaining respondents have experienced 6 to 13 years of education under their belts.

Out of the 30 respondents, the gender distribution shows a slightly higher representation of females at 53.3% compared to males at 46.7%. This gender balance indicates diversity within the teaching force, ensuring a broad range of perspectives and experiences in the educational institution. Allen and Seaman (2020) reported that in 2020, 53.3% of students enrolled in online courses were female, and 46.7% were male. According to the National Center for

Education Statistics (2022), in 2019-2020, 56.7% of undergraduate students in the United States were female and 43.3% were male. On the other hand, the study by Kessler et al. (2014) cited no significant overall gender difference in online learning achievement. However, there are some gender differences in specific online learning outcomes, such as engagement and satisfaction. Results imply that female instructors are more dominant in teaching than male counterparts.

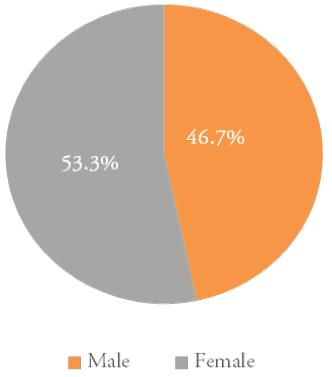

Figure 1. Distribution of Male and Female Respondents from the Teaching Faculty

Perceptions of the Educators toward the Challenge of Online Learning-Teaching during the New Normal.

The 1-5 scale describes the perception of the teachers on how challenging remote learning is, where 1 indicates a low perceived challenge, and 5 indicates a high perceived challenge.

Figure X. Scale describing the perception of the educators about how challenging remote teaching-learning is during the New Normal. Based on the data, the respondents generally perceive remote learning as challenging. A combined 77.7% of the respondents rated it as moderately to highly challenging (ratings 3, 4, and 5), while only 10% found it somewhat challenging but not overly so.

The fact that no respondents rated it as a low challenge (rating 1) may indicate that remote learning, at least for this sample, is not considered an effortless mode of education. Most respondents (76.7%) rated it a moderate to high challenge.

The data suggests that there are challenges associated with remote learning, which include issues such as adapting to new technology, managing time effectively, and maintaining motivation and engagement in a remote setting.

Understanding these challenges can help institutions and educators provide the necessary support and resources to improve the remote learning experience for students.

A study by Grynyuk et al. (2022) revealed that there were improper digital infrastructures in Ukraine's higher education institutions, unequal access for teachers and students to electronic devices and the Internet, methodological issues related to a lack of methodological support and specialized training programs for teachers to conduct distance instruction, psychological issues related to the development of motivation, teachers' commitment, and establishing new communities, and problems of a methodological nature associated with a lack of methodological support. Results imply that instructors' challenges should be supported by enough training on adapting the new technology, especially in using the Learning Management system Moodle 4.0.

Perceptions of the Educators about the Importance of Technology in the New Normal

The 1-5 scale describes the perception of the educators on the importance of technology, where 1 indicates a low perception of the importance of technology in flexible learning, and 5 indicates a high perception of volume.

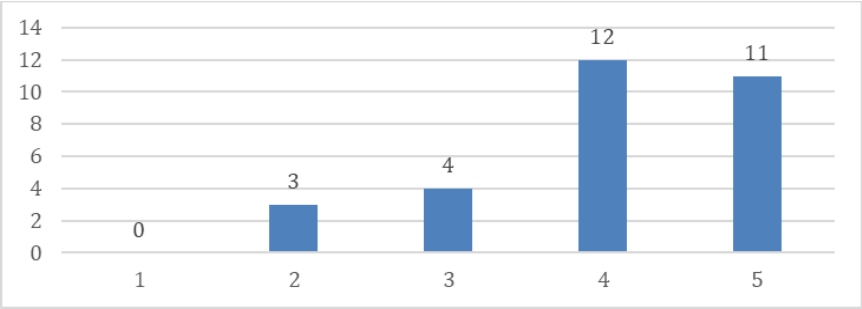

Figure 2. Scale Describes the Educators' Perception of the Importance of Technology in the New Normal

Based on the data, it is evident that technology is considered crucial in flexible learning by the majority of the respondents. An overwhelming 83.3% of the respondents rated technology as highly important (rating 5), while the remaining 16.7% perceived it as moderately necessary (rating 4). The absence of respondents in the lower ratings (1, 2, and 3) suggests a unanimous agreement among this sample regarding the importance of technology in flexible learning. This strong consensus indicates that technology is pivotal in facilitating flexible

education, which may encompass various modes such as online courses, blended learning, and remote instruction.

The data underscores the significance of integrating and leveraging technology effectively to support flexible learning initiatives, enhance educational experiences, and provide opportunities for learners to access education in diverse ways.

A survey of 30 full-time instructors at Agusan del Sur College, Incorporated found that most educators, approximately 77%, are relatively new to the teaching profession, while the rest have 6 to 13 years of experience. The respondents represent diverse courses, from AB to Basic Education, and their instructional roles encompass various subjects. Gender distribution is nearly balanced, with 53.3% females and 46.7% males, promoting diversity within the teaching force.

Regarding teaching modes, 83.3% of respondents prefer the hybrid approach, combining in-person and online instruction. In comparison, module-based teaching results by 3%, and synchronous education is less popular at 16.7%. Access to high-speed internet is a concern, with 66.7% of educators needing it, potentially impacting online instruction. Common problems include unstable internet connections and unscheduled interruptions, and strategies for maintaining work-life balance include time management and preparation ahead. Notably, 77.7% of respondents find remote learning moderately to highly challenging.

On the other hand, the importance of technology in flexible education is universally recognized, with 83.3% rating it as highly important, underlining its pivotal role in enhancing educational experiences and opportunities for learners. This research is supported by Al-jarf (2021) that technology has played a vital role in education during the COVID-19 pandemic, and educators perceive technology as necessary in the New Normal. Additionally, Aydin (2023) revealed that COVID-19 has positively impacted teachers' perceptions of technology use in the classroom, and teachers now perceive technology to be more critical than ever before. Hung (2021) cited that Teachers perceive the transition from onsite to online teaching as challenging. Still, they believe technology can improve education and learning in the New Normal. Costan et al. (2022) mentioned that the extended Theory Plan Behavior model accounts for 61% of the overall variations in intention to teach in the Flexible Learning System (FLS), that attitude is positively explained by job satisfaction and organizational commitment, that digital nativity and self-efficacy positively influence attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control in the context of teaching in FLS, and that perceived behavioral control is the strongest predictor of teaching

intention. These imply a positive attitude toward embracing the new modalities and the ability to cope with some challenges college instructors face with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 demands.

Mode of Teaching

The majority of respondents (83.3%) prefer the hybrid mode of teaching, which combines both in-person and online instruction. This preference suggests adaptability and recognizing the benefits of incorporating technology into traditional teaching methods. A smaller group (13.3%) favors module-based teaching, indicating a preference for self-paced learning and pre-prepared learning materials. The least preferred mode among respondents is synchronous teaching (16.7%), where real-time interaction between instructors and students is crucial. The research suggests that a smaller portion of respondents may find engaging in real-time online instruction challenging due to connectivity or other factors. Allen and Seaman (2020) cited that most students (53%) prefer to take some courses online, and 30% prefer to take all their systems online. Another study by Arpaci et al. (2022) found that most students in 22 out of 26 studies preferred a hybrid teaching mode. The results implied that the majority preferred the hybrid modality, which also entails the instructors' positive attitude to embrace this teaching trend. Aside from the positive attitude, it also requires time management, discipline, and resourcefulness. Further, Hybrid modalities encourage the integration of technology into the classroom to enhance students' digital literacy and prepare them for a technologically driven future.

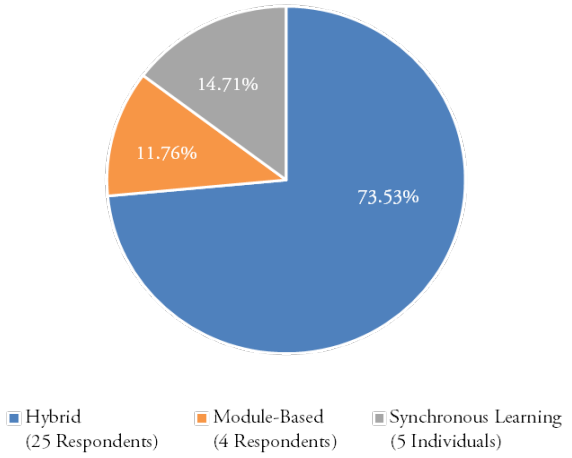

Figure 3. Mode of Teaching of College Instructors

The data revealed that 73.53% is the most preferred modality utilized by the respondents. This is reinforced by Detyna and Koch (2023), who state that hybrid learning entails engagement, equity of experience, non-standard use issues, and student flexibility benefits. Mirriahi et al. (2015) mentioned that hybrid learning is growing popular in higher education institutions because it improves pedagogy, enhances students' learning performance, and improves cost-effectiveness. However, according to Charlier and Lambert (2019), these impacts may differ according to student characteristics. These variables consist of learner cognitive skills, academic background, pre-existing knowledge of the learning field, and conceptions of knowledge and learning. Results imply that instructors and administrators must keep abreast of the trends and demands in delivering quality education to our respective learners.

A third of the respondents (33.3%) reported having access to high-speed Internet, essential for conducting online classes effectively. A significant portion (66.7%) indicated that they do not have access to high-speed Internet. There are concerns about the potential challenges these educators face in delivering online instruction and maintaining connectivity during remote teaching. Gillwald and Partridge (2023) support this result by providing the difference between learners with internet access and those without access because of distance, support from family, and financial constraints.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2018) has highlighted that opportunities are provided through the Internet, mobile phones, digital platforms, and digital financial services that can help bridge the digital divide. It is envisaged that these technological services can allow women to access jobs and earn income, and provide them with better access to knowledge and information. World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators database reported that in 2022, only 43% of the world's population had access to the Internet. World Bank (2022) and World Development Report (2022) mentioned that the digital divide is a significant obstacle to development and is widening in many countries. Donner et al. (2019) added that Low internet connectivity can significantly negatively impact education in developing countries by limiting students' access to educational resources and opportunities. Carillo et al. (2023) cited that Flexible learning provided chances for entrepreneurship, increased family time, and autonomy. However, the switch from traditional to Flexible Learning (FL) caused much worry, particularly for individuals with no internet access, no technology, unresponsive mentors, or who lived in remote places. Students maintained their resilience, optimism, and ability to adjust despite the setbacks. Results imply that instructors should have vast- knowledge and experience in the status of their learners to provide the best

materials, methods, and assessments in a Flexible manner that caters to their student's needs, styles, learning preferences, and time.

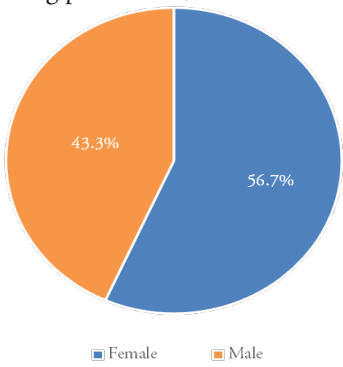

Figure 4 Percentage of Teachers Having Slow or High Internet Speed

Concerns

The most common concern experienced by a substantial number of respondents is the instability of their internet connection. This issue can significantly disrupt the teaching process. Similar to unstable relationships, unscheduled internet interruptions are a prevalent concern. These interruptions can be disruptive and affect the continuity of online classes. There is 12% of the full-time instructors cited health conditions such as headache, flu and mental stress concerns, which may limit their ability to engage in remote teaching. Some respondents mentioned financial matters as a concern, which could affect their access to technology and resources needed for online teaching. Figure 4 describes various concerns related to remote teaching. The results imply that instructors should prepare materials, strategies and assessments in case of unstable internet connections. The flexibility and alertness of the instructors are manifested in their commitment and dedication.

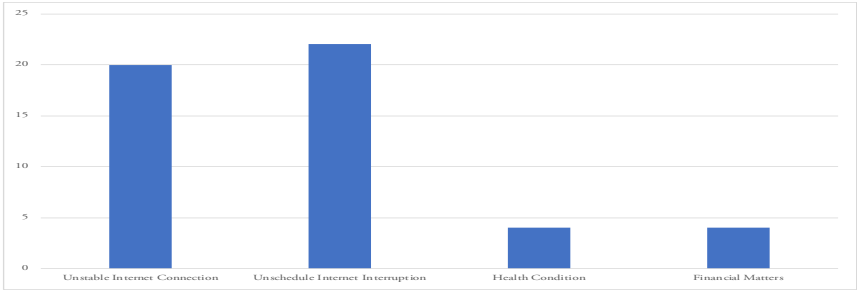

Figure 5. Different Concerns of Teachers during Remote Learning during the New Normal

Unscheduled internet Interruption is considered the topmost concern of the instructors. Numerous studies support this. The study by Xu et al. (2022) showed that the survey also found that 70% of businesses had experienced an unscheduled internet interruption in the past year. Further, an Education Week survey of 1,000 teachers found that 80% of teachers had experienced an unscheduled internet interruption in the past year. The survey also found that 40% of teachers said unscheduled internet interruptions harmed student's learning (Schwartz, 2020).

In the past year, the Becker's Hospital Review survey of 200 healthcare professionals found that 90% of healthcare facilities had experienced an unscheduled internet interruption. The survey also found that 20% of healthcare professionals said unscheduled internet interruptions led to patient safety incidents (Dean, 2023). Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) (2022) reported that unscheduled internet interruptions could significantly impact critical infrastructure, such as power grids, water, and transportation systems. The report found that unscheduled internet interruptions can disrupt operations, lead to financial losses, and even cause safety hazards. This implies instructors possess a positive attitude, maximum tolerance, patience and understanding so that emotional, intellectual and physical beings are well-manifested in dealing with their learners.

Means of Accessing the Internet

The majority (26 respondents) rely on Wi-Fi for internet access, a standard and convenient option for remote teaching. Nine prefer mobile data, indicating a degree of flexibility in Internet access even in areas with limited Wi-Fi infrastructure. None of the respondents mentioned using Peso-Net, suggesting that it may not be a widely available or used option in their region—other studies by Kennedy et al. (2022). In the United States, 98% of adults use the Internet, and the most common way to avail of the Internet is through a mobile phone or tablet. World Bank (2022) mentioned in World Development Report 2022 that Mobile phones and broadband are common means of accessing the Internet in developing countries. Donner et al. (2019) cited that mobile phones and public Internet cafes are the most common means of accessing the Internet for educational purposes in developing countries. Wang et al. (2022) found that Wi-Fi 6 is the latest generation of Wi-Fi technology, and it offers some advantages over previous generations, including faster speeds, lower latency, and improved performance in crowded environments. In the United States, Wi-Fi is the most widely used broadband internet access, with over 80% of households utilizing

it, according to Federal Communications Commission (2022) results. Research Center for Pew. In 2022. American usage of the Internet and other technologies. Results shown: In 2022, 98% of Americans accessed the Internet via Wi-Fi. World Bank (2022) mentioned in World Development Report 2022 that Wi-Fi is the most common broadband internet access in developing countries, with over 60% of households using Wi-Fi. Donner et al. (2019) mentioned that Wi-Fi improves access to educational resources and opportunities in developing countries, especially in rural areas where fixed broadband is unavailable. Salendab and Akmad (2023) found that teachers faced the most significant obstacles they had ever faced: power outages and internet access. To cope, they turned to proactive, solution-focused applications as well as psychological health and well-being. The results imply that instructors' resilience and flexibility in all aspects matter in dealing with these learning challenges. Instructors should always have backed-up plans, activities, and resources in power outages and unstable internet connectivity.

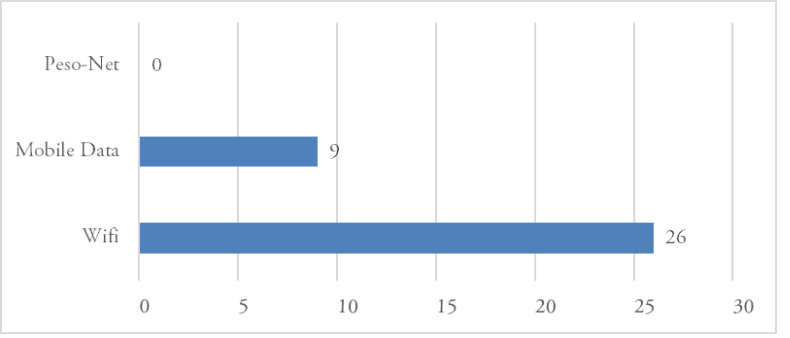

Figure 6. Graph Showing How Educators Access the Internet during Remote Learning during the New Normal

Devices Used in Online Teaching

A significant portion of educators use Android smartphones (21 respondents), highlighting the versatility of these devices for remote teaching. 27 respondents use laptops and desktops. The data indicate that the preferred devices for most respondents offer a more comprehensive set of tools and capabilities for online instruction. Tablet (0 respondents): None mentioned using tablets, indicating that these devices may not be available for online teaching in this context. Two respondents mentioned using other devices, including specialized or non-traditional devices, for online teaching. These studies support the result. Zhao and Cobb (2022) teachers use laptops in flexible learning environments,

including delivering instruction, providing student feedback, managing online learning resources, communicating with students and parents, and collaborating with other teachers.

On the other hand, Yasli et al. (2023) found that laptop use positively impacted teachers' teaching practices in flexible learning environments. Teachers reported that laptops helped them be more creative and innovative in their teaching and provided more differentiated instruction to students and feedback to engage students more actively in learning. Results imply that instructors' usage of laptops and other technology helps them adapt and compete in the Global Arena that demands digital and technological advantage. Laptop usage can be accessed anytime and anywhere as long as internet connectivity is available.

Lack of technical support, Students' lack of digital skills Efficiency: Laptops can help teachers be more efficient in their work by automating tasks and providing instant feedback to students. Professional development: Laptops can help teachers to stay up-to-date with the latest teaching and learning technologies. Collaboration: Laptops can help teachers to collaborate more easily with other teachers, students, and parents. In Oman, A study by Salih and Omar (2022), teachers' perceptions of their reflection and adjustment in online courses, as well as the different approaches they used in Oman's higher education institutions (HEIs).

Figure 7 describes what devices instructors use during remote learning. According to the results, most teachers use laptops or desktops, and the least use non-traditional devices for online teaching, which were not specified. Results imply that instructors should also use updated and upgraded laptops and desktops to deliver quality education and tackle the expected competencies in the semester.

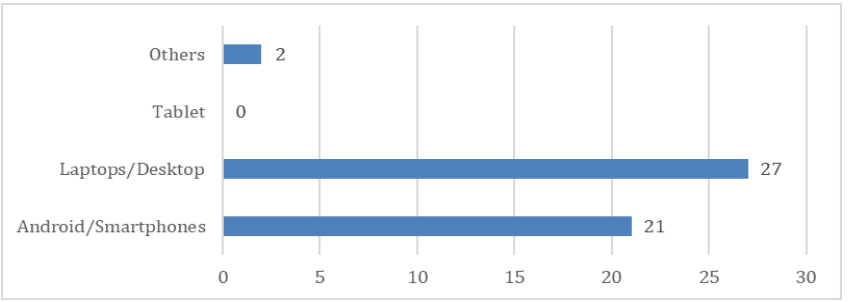

Figure 7. Graph showing what devices educators use during remote learning during the New Normal

Maintaining Work-Life Balance

The majority emphasizes time management as a crucial strategy, with 25 respondents highlighting the importance of scheduling and organization in balancing work and personal life. Preparation Ahead: 20 respondents prioritize preparing their teaching materials in advance, allowing them to better manage their time and responsibilities. Sending links or materials to students ahead of time is a strategy used by some respondents to ensure smooth online classes. 13 respondents did this. With 14 responses, a notable number of respondents mentioned building resiliency, indicating the importance of adapting to challenges and maintaining a positive mindset during remote teaching. On the one hand, flexible learning can give teachers more control over their work hours, resulting in a better work-life balance schedule.

On the other hand, flexible learning can also lead to increased workload and stress, as teachers may feel pressure to be available to students and parents 24/7. Kushwaha et al. (2023) mentioned that working mothers considered the top five sub-enablers: organizational work-family culture, work from arrangements, emotional intelligence, flexible work schedule, and family support. Yasli et al. (2023) found that teachers in Turkey were likelier to report that flexible learning hurt their work-life balance than teachers in the United States. The study also found that teachers with special needs students were likelier to report that flexible learning negatively affected their work-life balance. Results imply that college instructors should possess maximum tolerance and resiliency towards work and family and establish emotional, physical and spiritual activities to cope with challenges in delivering quality education.

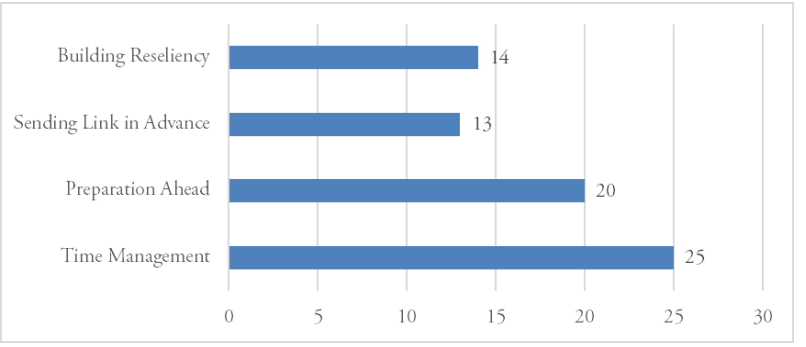

Figure 8. Various Strategies for Maintaining a Work-Life Balance While Teaching Remotely

Results revealed that Time Management is one of the strategies for maintaining a work-life balance while teaching remotely. Some studies support these. Alfatihah et al. (2021) found that work-life balance affects job satisfaction, and work motivation affects job satisfaction. Further Danchikov et al. (2021) conclude that online learning can allow students to manage their time more effectively. However, developing self-discipline and time management skills is crucial to succeed in an online learning environment. Ginaya et al. (2018) mentioned that Blended learning provides opportunities for students to develop their time management skills as they can progress at their rate and timetable. Heng and Sol (2021) facilitated the adoption of ICT in the classroom and opened the door for the digital transformation of education. Moreover, Idrizi et al. (2021) found that students in online learning need to develop good time management skills to succeed. It is also essential to note that mastering. Anyone can learn and use the talent of time management. Researchers are developing new interventions and strategies to help students develop their time management skills in a flexible learning environment. Results imply balancing time with the family and work requires focus, time management, and discipline. Instructors who are used to managing their time productively learn to adapt new modalities with ease, calm, and grateful hearts.

A significant relationship exists between instructors' experiences in the flexible learning delivery instructions. Flexible learning delivery instruction can significantly impact the instructor's workload, the challenges they face, and the strategies they use to succeed. Instructors teaching a fully online course may have different experiences than instructors teaching a blended learning course, which combines online and face-to-face instruction. Instructors teaching a synchronous online course, which is delivered in real-time, may have different experiences than instructors teaching an asynchronous online course, which is delivered at the student's own pace.

Instructors need more training and technical competencies to conduct online courses, which can affect the effectiveness of hybrid classes. Kundu and Bej (2021) acknowledged that many students felt underprepared for the overnight pivot to online learning. However, our staff also acknowledged their concerns about translating their teaching style to an online environment and how to develop online interactivity. Cabrejas and Mendoza (2023) mentioned that the students exhibited a high level of engagement and demonstrated highly self-regulated learning practices. Academic achievement was substantially influenced by student engagement, with behavioral engagement emerging as the strongest predictor. However, no statistically significant correlation exists

between students' academic achievement and self-regulated learning practices. The study highlighted the importance for educators to create creative techniques to engage students in the pedagogical process and introspect on their learning practices to enhance academic progress. Further, Ulanday et al. (2021) found that the quality of teaching and learning in hybrid classes depends on several factors, including the skills and knowledge of instructors. The study also found that instructors need to be able to use a variety of online learning technologies effectively. Another study by Cicha et al. (2021) discovered that students' sense of self-efficacy and enjoyment of this type of education are the most significant factors that impact their feelings and can persuade them to switch from teaching in the classroom to teaching in the distance learning model.

Technology issues, like sluggish internet connections and unannounced power interruptions, can pose significant challenges for instructors and students in hybrid and online learning environments. Another study by Green (2022) revealed that teachers believe that the following factors contribute to productive learning activity: the establishment of safe learning environments; a general appreciation of the opportunity to use technology for teaching and learning; and the use of a heutagogical approach, which emphasizes the development of knowledge and skills for teaching in hybrid learning environments. Despite these challenges, instructors value the flexibility inherent in Flexible Learning, spanning modalities, assessment methods, and instructional delivery, promoting greater student responsibility and time management, ultimately enhancing engagement and attentiveness.

The research investigated the experiences of 30 full–time Agusan del Sur College instructors concerning Flexible Learning in the New Normal using a mixed-method approach. The findings revealed that (1) Instructors need more training and technical competencies to conduct online courses, which can affect the effectiveness of hybrid classes; (2) Technical problems, including slow internet connections and unannounced power interruptions, pose challenges for instructors and students, (3) Despite these challenges, instructors value the flexibility inherent in Flexible Learning, spanning modalities, assessment methods, and instructional delivery, promoting greater student responsibility and time management, ultimately enhancing engagement and attentiveness, (4) Smartphones and mobile applications serve as prevalent educational tools and eLearning resources, (5) There remains a preference for face-to-face classes over online learning.

The study also underscores the positive impact of Flexible Learning, encompassing synchronous and asynchronous platforms, in enhancing digital and technological competencies, with 45.4% of students and 48.8% of instructors

reporting its benefits and (6) instructors with 0-5 years of teaching experience exhibit excellent proficiency in Flexible Learning modalities and assessment methods. Results imply that instructors who exhibit excellent proficiency in Flexible Learning Modalities and Assessment Methods can help older instructors who need to master the Learning Management System competencies. Moreover, The School Administration should sustain the continuous improvement and feedback of the Challenges and Opportunities of implementing the Flexible Learning Modality.

CONCLUSIONS

Flexible learning programs can be designed and implemented in a way that is effective and equitable for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. To support teachers and students in flexible learning environments through practical training, resources, and communication, Flexible learning (1) can meet the needs of diverse learners, including working adults, students with families, and students with disabilities; (2) promote collaboration and interaction between students and teachers; (3) enhance the assessment of student learning effectively; and (4) provide feedback to students and teachers in a way that supports their Learning and development. Additionally, Flexible Learning supports lifelong Learning.

Overall, the research on flexible learning experiences in higher education is positive. However, instructors encountered some challenges in experiencing this Flexible modality. Additional training and seminars are needed to sustain the implementation of hybrid learning in the New Normal.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of the study may have an impact on the development and use of FL policies and processes at higher education institutions. By addressing these concerns and maximizing FL's purported benefits, educational institutions can better equip instructors and students for the evolving nature of education. Moreover, the findings may provide instructors with thorough training on FL modalities, evaluation techniques, and technology integration; make sure that instructors and students may access the internet consistently and dependably; promote the creation of dynamic and captivating online educational resources and content; to exchange FL best practices, encourage a culture of cooperation and peer support among educators; carry out continuous assessments and reviews to pinpoint areas where FL implementation needs to be improved. Further, the results of this study will be communicated to stakeholders during

the Stakeholders Forum Faculty Meeting and posted on School Websites. The findings should be incorporated in the Learning Continuity Plan, Stakeholders and Parents Association Annual Plan, Faculty Development Plan, and Students Supreme Council Plan for the Academic Year 2024 onwards for the planning, implementation, assessment, and continuous improvement of implementing the Flexible or Hybrid modalities.

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