



Academically Challenged Students in Mathematics in Modular Distance Learning

Marilyn A. Torres

Department of Education, Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu, Philippines

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9304-9855>

ABSTRACT: This phenomenological study sought to explore the lived experiences of the low-performing students in terms of the benefits, challenges, and coping strategies in a modular distance learning modality. The focused group interview was used with the purposively chosen respondents and employed triangulation of data to validate their responses. Results show that flexibility of learning, self-paced learning, access to technology, and simplified concepts and outputs were the benefits of MDL. However, lack of interaction with teachers and procrastination are the common challenges that these students have encountered and tried to cope up with. They have adopted positive methods and strategies to manage their difficulty in learning mathematics like self-motivation, seeking support, online information sources, and time management have been essential in studying in this modality. Learning mathematics is formally learned best in school but some of the students displayed positive engagement with MDL and further research should be conducted in that regard.

KEYWORDS: Academically challenged, Coping strategy, Modular distance learning, Modality.

INTRODUCTION

Students' poor performance in mathematics has been a significant concern in any teaching-learning modality. Like other learning problems, math difficulty hinders students from performing up to their potential in school and beyond. Handful studies have been made to find out the factors affecting students' performance in the subject in both basic and tertiary educations (Peteros et al., 2019). Most of the studies found that students' performance in mathematics is influenced by students' attitude towards the subject, knowledge, teaching strategies, classroom environment, gender stereotypes (Mohamed et al., 2011; Zsoldos-Marchis, 2015; Acharya, 2017). Accordingly, there is limited interest that is focused on how the at-risk students in mathematics are coping and learning in a printed modular approach (Fong et al., 2020). Thus, this phenomenological study sought to explore the lived experiences of the low-performing students in terms of the benefits, challenges, and coping strategies in a modular distance learning modality.

Education in mathematics plays a significant role in multi academic disciplines such as science, engineering, biology, economics, medicine, research, and technology (Tapia, 1996). The inclusion of the subject in the basic levels of education can suffice its significance as a crucial part of societal development and the integral force behind all scientific discoveries. Davies et al. (2012) perceived math as an essential subject not only for achieving an academic qualification in college but also in preparing students fit for scientific and technical fields that are in demand for nation-building. In a broad sense, the limitless uses and influences of math as a pillar for economic advancement attract the educational sector to invest in it on a global scale.

Despite the crucial role that mathematics plays, students' difficulty in the subject has been a great concern to educators (Chand et al., 2021). These groups of students are commonly referred to as underachievers or academically at-risk which is a defining characteristic to a student who is likely to fail or achieve basic levels of proficiency skills in key subject areas like math (Bulger, 2006; Jayaprakash et al., 2014). According to the results of The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) - OECD in 2018, China ranked 1st with 591 points while the Philippines ranked last with 340 points in nearly 80 nations of 15-year-old students' scholastic performance on mathematics (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). Poor mathematics performance indicates an alarming position of the Philippines competitiveness concerning the international standard. In response to the NCES 2018 report, the Department of Education conceded the result as a baseline to global standards, benchmark effective reforms in addressing issues and gaps in attaining quality in basic education (Reysio-Cruz, 2019).



Similarly, the results from Trends International Mathematics and Science Study 2019 (TIMSS) for grade four pupils, Philippines scored only 297 in mathematics and 249 in science, which are significantly lower than any other participating country, the Philippines also scored the lowest among all 58 participating countries for both tests (Magsambol, 2020). The Department of Education (DepEd) welcomed the results as a step to reform and upgrade the curriculum and address the learning gaps in the country's basic education (Magsambol, 2020). Indeed, this is way more challenging as we still confront the ongoing pandemic where most schools are shifting from traditional face-to-face to distance learning.

The ongoing CoVid-19 pandemic is reshaping education. Prior to the crisis, Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 acclaimed the need for flexible education systems to provide diverse learning pathways that support lifelong learning and equity. With the ongoing crisis, shifting and adapting flexible learning is needed more than ever to continuously provide students with the best learning conditions. Thus, pushing the educational sector to innovate flexible learning approaches to continuously provide essential services to students.

Several research studies reveal the substantial effects of the closures of educational institutions, transforming the traditional face-to-face learning to new modes of classroom delivery (online, blended, modular, tv, and radio-based) collectively known as distance learning (Vlachos, 2021). According to Gallagher and McCormick (1999), the major concern of distance learning is its quality especially in the following domains: 1) student learning outcomes, 2) student interactions with teachers, 3) student satisfaction, 4) student attitudes, and 5) teacher satisfaction. A plethora of research emerged examining various factors affecting the quality of these domains in diverse settings (primary, secondary, tertiary levels) and disciplines (mathematics, science, medical, engineering, etc.).

In accordance with the Department of Education (DepEd) survey results during the enrollment phase for the school year 2020-2021, 7.2 million enrollees prefer to use "modular distance learning" among the alternative learning modalities offered (Hernando-Malipot, 2020). Despite the insurgency of 'modular' distance learning, almost all public schools in the country are still using the printed or digital modular learning approach. In this modality, the students are placed to learn in the comfort of their homes, with limited interaction with teachers, and parents or guardians take charge of the learning.

Furthermore, the wide disparities in students' performance in mathematics in the country led the researcher to use the phenomenological study to explore the lived experiences of the low-performing students in terms of the benefits, challenges, and coping strategies in a modular distance learning modality. The results of this research would be beneficial to the school specifically in the concerns and issues on the use of modular distance learning in the field of mathematics for the following reasons: a) awareness of the issues and concerns of the students with regards to modular distance learning; b) future decisions and plans for the improvement of using the modality considering the issues and concerns of the students; c) improvement in the teaching strategies of teachers in the use of modular distance learning; d) establishing learning options appropriate for the students may be enhanced; e) baseline for decision-making for the improvement of the learning outcomes of students in mathematics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Students worldwide were missing face-to-face instruction due to CoVid-19. The unique circumstances of this pandemic regarding school closures brought concerns to the educational sector. Solan (2021), described the possibility that the gap between high and low-achieving students will become larger. Solan pointed the parallels between the current situation and common reasons students miss school such as absenteeism and weather-related school closures can provide an insight into its effect on student's achievement in key subject areas like mathematics.

Mathematics education thrives in a face-to-face approach. This is due to the nature of mathematics, "its capacity to compress information into abstract and highly usable forms" (Alders et al., 2006), which requires students to make sense of abstract mathematical concepts. In face-to-face learning, math teachers unpack and decompress knowledge and concepts for their students by using pedagogical strategies like problem-solving, inquiry-based teaching, using manipulatives, and collaborative work (Ball & Bass, 2003).

Likewise, Zhou (2007) observed that students can learn math better and more effectively when they talk about it with their peers. Bringing students together can challenge them to understand other people's views and to explain and defend their ideas. Through collaboration and socialization help students establish their identities and improve their understanding of the concept (Zhou, 2007).



Similarly, Chen and Lai (2005) mentioned that the traditional math teaching methods include an explanation, demonstration of teaching materials, arranging learning activities such as observation, experiment, practice, presentations, collaborative learning, question and answer, output, and assignment corrections. However, in challenging subjects like math, struggling students often get frustrated and despondent. Since in traditional method, students are taught at the same pace regardless of mastery. Teachers often have little time to assist individual students, and students have no one to turn to for assistance. Bandura (1977) suggests that this kind of repeated experience could lead to low academic self-efficacy, loss of interest, and effort.

Even with this emphasis on how mathematics is normally taught in a traditional setting, some educators have found the merit of teaching in the distance learning classroom. Before the pandemic, modular teaching is one of the most widespread teaching-learning methods in many countries and is used in almost all subjects like science, mathematics, as well as in computers education (Sadiq et al., 2014). In the modular approach, the use of self-learning modules in teaching and learning is another form of individual used instructions (Sree, 2010).

Considering the individual differences among students (high-and-low performing) which are rarely addressed in face-to-face teaching, the modular approach helps students to work and develop at their own pace (Kandarp, 2013). According to Loughram et al. (2000), that telling is not teaching and listening is not learning which means that students learn more at their own pace. It is best accomplished through self-learning in which understanding comes first and after the expression of concepts.

Wenner et al. (2001), compared two methods in teaching mathematics, one using traditional and the other is modular methods. They found that the modular approach is effective in remedial math learning, but the level of success greatly depends on the student participation, quantity of concepts covered, assessment, and teachers teaching methods in completion of the modules. Just like in traditional classroom learning, this approach relies on teachers and students. The attendance of the teachers includes full familiarity with the content and instructions in the modules to help students pass the exam after the module. When teachers relate mathematical concepts to their relevance to the real world, students tend to understand, thus completing the modules more easily. The positive attitude of students greatly helps in accomplishing the modules, being self-reliant in their learning, embracing opportunities for academic achievement (Wenner et al., 2001).

Sejpal et al. (2013) mentioned that the modular approach enables students to accept and have greater responsibility and control of their learning. On the part of the students, modular learning demands greater maturity which is suitable for mature learners. Similarly, Ambayon et al. (2020) stated that the modular approach is a teaching method where students are given the freedom to learn everything in the module using their own pace, effort, and resources. The researchers emphasized the distinction of the method from the traditional one wherein most of the time students listen and just learn the concepts presented by the teachers. Hence, these researchers suggested that this mode of delivery may be a good alternative since it emphasized student-centered and self-paced.

The study revealed that using the modular learning approach had improvement effects on students' attitudes towards mathematics (Wenner et al., 2001; Sejpal et al., 2013; Ambayon et al., 2020). Also, students using this approach might have benefited since more time is spent on learning tasks at their own pace. According to Al-Quhtani et al. (2013), a modular approach can support students more effectively than face-to-face learning alone.

The Philippines' poor standing in mathematics has been a great concern to teachers and policymakers. Based on the latest international assessment results from The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the country has consistently been at the bottom part. The result only validated the existence of the problem in the teaching and learning outcomes in the subject. To contribute to the improvement and educational practice in the areas of mathematics particularly in a modular approach, researchers aiming at gaining deep knowledge on how these at-risk students learned mathematical understanding is necessary.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researcher in this study employed a descriptive phenomenological study approach. As described by Speziale and Carpenter (2007), the purpose of this study is to describe a particular phenomenon and the appearance of things as lived experience. Despite the enormous methods in research, using a phenomenological study will give detailed and in-depth data on the lived experiences of the low-performing students in terms of the benefits, challenges, and coping strategies in a modular distance learning approach.



Research Site

Since face-to-face classes are not yet allowed in the country, the Department of Education (DepEd) is implementing blended or distance learning modalities which include printed modules, offline digital modules, online, and tv and radio-based instructions (Cos et al., 2021). The study was conducted in a public school that is currently adapting a printed modular distance learning modality. The researcher purposely chose this institution so that the result could be of great help to schools implementing this type of modality.

Research Participant

The research participants were senior high school students in both academic and technical strands. The teachers were giving these students their printed self-learning modules and learning activity sheets (LAS) for subjects with unavailable modules. The respondents of this study were also given a weekly home learning plan (WHLP) in which specific activities to be answered from the modules were reflected. In a country with meager bandwidth and poor families with few devices to use, the only way for these subject teachers to reach and explain math concepts to their students is through Facebook messenger.

Sampling Technique

In any qualitative research design, selecting the manner of collecting data and from whom the data will be obtained is crucial (Bernard, 2002). The purposive sampling technique was utilized in recruiting the research respondents. The purposive sampling technique was a deliberate choice of the researcher in selecting the respondents based on the knowledge, information, experience that were proficient and well-informed with the phenomenon of interest (Bernard, 2002; Patton, 2002; Tongco, nd). Consequently, the researcher decided to seek respondents who were willing to provide the information based on their knowledge and experience.

Moreover, the research respondents were subjected to inclusion and exclusion criteria in the selection. The inclusion criteria specified by the researcher were the following students: a) He/She was enrolled in Mathematics for the school year 2021-2022, b) He/She had a final grade in Mathematics that belonged to the 'fairly satisfactory' category using face-to-face learning c) He/she had a final grade in Mathematics improved to 'satisfactory-outstanding' using the modular distance learning, d) He/She may be contacted using online applications such as Facebook messenger and zoom. e) He/She was willing to participate and provide honest responses.

Those students who were perceived to be academically "at-risk" before the pandemic that was returnee or dropped out, transferee, irregular and those who were not willing to provide the needed data in the study were excluded in the selection of the respondents. Further, the research respondents were considered for withdrawal of consent when they no longer wished to remain in the study.

Data Collection

For this study, the researcher conducted focus group interviews with the respondents to explore their lived experiences in terms of the benefits, challenges, and coping strategies in a modular distance learning modality. According to McLafferty (2004), a focus group interview will allow the participants to respond in the manner they are comfortable with. The method of the interview was semi-structured and in an informal conversational manner to encourage the respondents to reveal their individual stories and experiences.

This would give the respondents the chance to interact with each other as they shared their experiences. The interview questions were in English, but the researcher translated them into vernacular for the respondents to have a better understanding. The questionnaires consist of questions that would answer the data needed. The study used the demographic profile which consisted of the economic status of the respondent's family whether they have high or low income, and occupation and educational attainment of the parents. The respondents were also asked if they were working while studying at the same time.

The medium of communication was through online applications such as Facebook messenger and zoom. Gathering data conducted using communication mediated by computers is an acceptable research method (Salmons, 2014). The researcher ensured that proper protocol in the gathering was observed. The respondents were provided with informed consent forms. Only those participants that signed the informed consent form were included in the focus group interview. The researcher prepared the online application preferred by the participant. Each interview lasted between 45-60 minutes. The researcher ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the responses and no one else had the access to the information gathered to warrant the privacy of the data.

Rigor and Trustworthiness



To warrant the rigor and trustworthiness of the study, the researcher used the suggested strategies of Lincoln and Guba (1985) which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To ensure the credibility of the research findings, as proposed by Marshal and Rossman (2016), the researcher employed triangulation of data. Triangulation allowed the research to verify the information from the respondents during the interview and further confirmed it through examining documents and observations. Sufficient information about the research process, in-depth description of the questionnaire, interview and observation details promote richness and thickness of the findings to assure transferability (Marshal & Rossman, 2016). To increase dependability, the researcher provided a detailed record of how the data was collected, categorized, derived, and the changes made which allowed the readers to evaluate the study (Anney, 2014). Furthermore, in establishing confirmability, member checking is used to confirm the correctness of the data (Creswell, 2013), a detailed audit trail is provided (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and checking and rechecking data (Marshal & Rossman, 2016) were executed.

Data Analysis

The method chosen for this research was thematic content analysis. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report findings of repeated patterns. This method does not only describe data but also involves interpretation in the processes of selecting codes and themes. The researcher followed the phases of thematic analysis described by Braun & Clark (2006), which includes six phases: (a) familiarization, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) involved reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, (f) producing the report.

Additionally, thematic content analysis is deemed suitable to delve deeper into the responses of the academically at-risk students about their lived experiences in terms of the benefits, challenges, and coping strategies with the modular distance learning modality that they have received. In obtaining a general sense of information, significant statements and patterns were noted. The process of coding was done manually. The researcher identified repeated words and patterns and highlighted main ideas to generate initial codes. Codes were then placed into themes.

Ethical Considerations

In any type of research, there are ethical issues that need to be considered. The Council of American Anthropological Association issued ethical guidelines which include that the aims of any investigation should be communicated to possible 'respondents', the right to anonymity of all 'respondents', safeguarding of the rights, interests, and sensitivities of those studied (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Moreover, the need to maintain confidentiality and suggests negotiating the level of involvement with the respondents particularly in the sharing of reports and progress of the research with the respondents (Robson, 1993). Thus, the researcher followed these guidelines throughout the conduct of this study and sought approval from the School Head indicating the purpose of this study and this would not entail any financial and management conflict before interacting with the respondents. Voluntary Informed Consent Forms were given to the participants. The participants were also informed as to the purpose of the study. Enough time was given to the participants so that they can depict their true views on the questions, especially during the interview. Confidentiality and anonymity of the responses were maintained strictly to ensure the privacy of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile

The study involved ten (10) academically at-risk students as respondents. They were categorized as low-performing students in terms of their academic performance in mathematics during face-to-face learning. The academic performance was identified based on their school records before the implementation of modular distance learning.

The respondents were 16 to 18 years old with an average of 17 years of age, and 60% were females. Most of them were working students. One (1) or 10% of the respondents is an only child, four (4) or 40% of them were the eldest children in the family, and five (5) or 50% of them were eldest or middle children and were working students.

The parents of these respondents were laborers on a contractual basis and on-call employees like salespeople to carenderia, carpenter, and few of them were relying on the financial support from their relatives since they lose their jobs and income due to the CoVid-19 pandemic. Their monthly income ranges from Php 2000.00 – Php 10000.00 but most of them belong to Php 3000.00/month. Most of these parents were high school graduates. Only one (1) of the respondents' parents finished elementary.



These parents have at least one (1) to seven (7) children ranging from 3 to 20 years of age. The support given by the parents to these respondents was both moral and financial support except for the five (5) parents, who did not give financial support. The said parents of the respondents were the ones who let their children work and earned income to support their own needs including some of their family's basic needs.

Three major themes that emerged from the analysis of the data: The Positive Effects of Modular Distance Learning, The Negative Effects of Modular Distance Learning, and the Coping Strategies of the Students in Modular Distance Learning.

Theme 1: Positive Effects of Modular Distance Learning

Students who were low performing in mathematics during the traditional face-to-face learning have different views on the benefits and positive effects of modular distance learning. However, some were similar to other respondents' responses that helped them overcome their difficulty in math. These were the features of modular distance learning that proved to be beneficial to these students:

The flexibility of Learning. The flexibility of modular distance learning is considered to be the most appealing factor, contributing to these students preferring to study in this modality over conventional education. With its promises like more freedom and convenience, flexibility has a positive impact on students' overall learning.

Flexible learning provided these students with full accountability and control of their learning. According to Shurville et al. (2008), it is an educational philosophy concerned with providing the students with increased choice, convenience, and personalization on how learning occurs to them. As revealed in the data, students enjoyed the freedom to decide and schedule time for their learning. The convenience of being in control of how they would learn by tailoring their learning strategies to their capabilities. This ultimately led them to enjoy learning math and producing better results.

This evidence is manifested when respondent 1 said "...I liked modular because I am in control of learning the lesson...". He made his own schedule and made sure that "...I could answer the modules anytime and finished it before the schedule of submission..." -R6. Moreover, he was motivated to study even more "...I studied harder this time so that I can be a regular employee, answered my modules at night after worked, it's better because the submission of outputs is weekly..." -R9.

Self-paced Learning. Students considered self-paced learning to be one of the positive effects of modular distance learning. This allowed the students to study the modules and other learning materials at their speed. They could easily perform the activities that they already knew and focus on the things that they found challenging. Self-paced learning benefitted especially those who were working students. They learned time management and scheduling and found it fulfilling to manage their own time in doing the modules.

This is supported by the findings of Balentyne & Varga (2016) that attitudes towards mathematics and the students' value of the subject improved because of self-paced learning. Respondent 1 who belongs to non-working students said, "...answer first the activity that is easy then the challenging ones...". This was also supported by the statements of respondents 8 and 10 who said, "...I have my own time to study and learn for as long as I'm satisfied with my learnings..." -R8. "...convenient time to study after work without any pressure and can adjust my time especially to difficult lessons in math..." -R10.

Access to Technology. Based on the result, one of the respondents noticed how technology helped him overcome his difficulty in learning math in this modality. For the lessons that were difficult for him to understand, he relied on the internet to search for video tutorials about the lessons and looking for additional examples that he could use as a guide. According to Rahmatika et al. (2021) integrating YouTube in the class has advantages in the context of learning and teaching. Due to the lack of interaction with teachers in MDL, relevant videos on YouTube helped these students learn. Respondent 6 said that "...I liked modular because I'm allowed to use the internet to search for examples...").

Simplified Concepts and Outputs. Students have agreed that the content structure presented in the modules was simplified and well-lighted for them to learn. Some of the activities that needed to be answered were provided with answer keys for them to be used as a guide which helped these students to practice more especially on the calculation part. Aside from the simplified content, the teachers were lenient in giving written works and performance tasks to comply. Teachers felt hampered due to a lack of capacity to facilitate and explain MDL sessions (Guiamalon, 2021). As stated by respondent 7 she said, "...I can make the activities well because my teacher only give one or two and it's way easier...".



Theme 2: Untoward Challenges in Modular Distance Learning

It could be seen from the data that these students encountered challenges as they studied in a modular distance learning modality. These were the identified drawbacks of this modality as noted by the respondents:

Lack of Interaction with Teachers. Students were having difficulty getting in touch with their teachers unlike in a traditional class. In this modality, the teachers were only giving printed modules and guides to students as to the activities that needed to be answered. Due to limited internet connectivity and gadgets for both teachers and students, the interaction was commonly done through Facebook messenger. Though they could send messages, it would take time for them to get a response from their teachers. Lack of interaction, personal touch, and less attendance are among the significant drawbacks of MDL (Arora & Srinivasan, 2020).

This is exhibited by the responses of these students, "...there are difficult activities that could be best learned if explained by the teacher..." -R3. "...learning in modular is tiring because the teacher cannot give more examples..." -R7. This was also agreed by respondent 8, "...I could not join the online consultation since I am working on class hours..."

Procrastination. This is one of the main drawbacks of MDL. According to Plaxton (2017), students regarded procrastination as the worst hindrance in managing their time. They would prioritize the things they revel in over schoolwork. With no face-to-face interaction with teachers and other students, some would find it hard to keep track of their activities. The teacher is not around to constantly remind them about the pending outputs and deadlines.

Swanson (2016) considered this behavior as a failure of self-regulation. Because of this, schoolwork is frequently neglected. As mentioned by respondent 2, "...the schedule is weekly, it's difficult to follow the schedule as long I can pass on the deadline...". Since the modules given is to be answered weekly, this student tends to enjoy flexible schedule "...sometimes I procrastinate in doing the activities since I am working, that's why I am prone to cramming..." -R10.

Theme 3: Coping Strategies in Modular Distance Learning

Academically at-risk students had encountered a lot of challenges in MDL and adopt positive methods and strategies to manage their difficulty in learning math. Kimotho (2018) defined coping as the cognitive and emotional effort of an individual to deal with both internal and external demands of unexpected situations. These students identified their positive coping strategies as follows:

Self-motivation. Students employ self-regulating strategies to cope up with MDL. They motivate themselves for the sake of learning and pursuing their education. In order to continuously achieve something, high motivation is crucial (Gopalan et al., 2017). They motivate themselves to stay positive "...I strive hard to learn to get good grades and pass the subject..." -R1. Moreover, they try to bounce back after receiving low grades in the previous year "...I want to improve my grades to have a chance to be regular in my work..." -R10.

Seeking Support. One of the important coping strategies for students in distance learning is the support system that they can get from their families, peers, and teachers. They turn to this strategy when they encountered difficulty learning the concepts and when they have internet connection concerns. To augment their understanding of the lesson "...I ask my classmate whenever I do not understand..." -R3.

Furthermore, some students asked for help from their family members. According to Bhamani et al. (2020), parental support is an important factor in students' education. Parental support plays an important role in students' academic success, especially in distance learning. Some parents who have time and skills educate their children. As mentioned by the respondent 8, "...my cousins help me in difficult activities..."

Online Information Sources. The limited learning materials and instructions in MD resulted in students relying on the internet for additional information needed to understand complex lessons. The Internet can be used as a tool not only for social connection and entertainment but also for academic information (Dogruer et al., 2011). In this modality, students have become more self-reliant since they are encouraged and free to search for information online. Respondent 3 said, "...I use YouTube for a video tutorial of the lessons..."

Online resources supplemented students with a wealth of information, knowledge, and provided them with increased opportunities for learning despite the absence of their teachers. The internet serves as a teacher to these students. They can get relevant materials from many sites, lectures, and video sessions which enable students to learn on their own. Respondent 8



mentioned, "...there are limited examples provided in the modules that is why I need to research for me to understand...". This only shows that the internet is serving these students in this type of modality.

Time Management. One of the difficulties in MDL is the scheduling of time. Students will have difficulty accomplishing tasks and other works with poor time management. Gueta & Janer (2021) agreed that all works can be done smoothly with the proper time frame. Thus, stress caused by cramming can be avoided. These students created a general outline of their schedules that they could maintain on most days which still leaves room for flexibility.

This was agreed by most of the respondents, respondent 4 confessed that "...it is my routine to answer every night because there is no distraction...". Working students who were aiming to continue their studies despite being busy agreed the importance of sticking to their schedules "...I will follow the schedule given by the teacher..." -R7. Respondent 9 also agreed that he learned to manage time effectively "...I see to it that I can answer after work especially during day-off so that I can still submit on time...".

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Positive coping strategies and adaptations have been essential during the implementation of MDL, especially for low-performing students. This study showed that the students displayed positive engagement with this modality despite that the mathematics subject is formally learned best in the conventional face-to-face approach. A rapid transition from conventional face-to-face learning to modular distance learning may not have the same impact on students' engagement on the educational and social levels. Further studies are needed to ascertain the learning situation of the students in MDL is warranted.

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