RESHAPING SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION THROUGH A MODULAR APPROACH

Pretváranie vzdelávania v sociálnej práci prostredníctvom modulárneho prístupu

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ABSTRAKT

Epidémia COVID-19 spôsobila výrazné narušenie vo viacerých odvetviach vrátane vzdelávania. V reakcii na to zaviedla *Južná filipínska škola agrobiznisu, námorníctva a vodných zdrojov* (SPAMAST) modulárny vzdelávací model s cieľom udržať kontinuitu vo vzdelávaní v sociálnej práci. Tento výskum skúma výzvy, skúsenosti a ponaučenia z tejto transformácie s cieľom informovať inštitucionálne postupy, ako aj rozsiahlejšie politické reformy. Údaje boli získané pomocou deskriptívne-kvalitatívnej metodiky s validovanými otvorenými otázkami v rozhovoroch, ktoré boli distribuované prostredníctvom *Google Forms*. Dáta boli interpretované pomocou tematickej analýzy a systematického kódovania, ako aj súvisiacej literatúry. Zistenia poukázali na značné výzvy: študenti bojovali s porozumením témy, preťažením termínmi a nedostatočným prístupom na internet, zatiaľ čo učitelia vnímali nedostatočnú účasť a spätnú väzbu. Štúdia zdôrazňuje potrebu reštrukturalizácie modulárneho vzdelávania tak, aby bolo inkluzívnejšie, responzívnejšie a odolnejšie. Taktiež sa zasadzuje za väčšiu inštitucionálnu podporu a regulačné zmeny na posilnenie kompetencií pedagógov a digitálnej infraštruktúry v budúcich prostrediach krízového alebo zmiešaného vzdelávania.

Kľúčové slová: Sociálna práca. Modulárny prístup. Nová normalita.

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 epidemic caused significant disruptions in several industries, including education. In response, the *Southern Philippines Agribusiness Marine and Aquatic School of Technology* (SPAMAST) implemented a modular learning model to maintain continuity in social work education. This research investigates the challenges, experiences, and lessons learned from that transformation, with the goal of informing institutional practices as well as larger policy reforms. Data were obtained using a descriptive-qualitative methodology, with validated open-ended interview questions administered via *Google Forms*. The data were interpreted using thematic analysis and systematic coding, as well as related literature. The findings highlighted considerable challenges: students battled with topic understanding, deadline overload, and inadequate internet access, while teachers reported insufficient participation and feedback methods. The study emphasizes the need to restructure modular learning to be more inclusive, responsive, and resilient. It also advocated for more institutional support and regulatory changes to boost educator competence and digital infrastructure in future crisis-driven or blended learning settings.

Key words: Social Work. Modular approach. New normal.

INTRODUCTION

Over 1.7 billion pupils worldwide were impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic, which caused significant disruptions to education (Mahdy 2020). In response, educators in the Philippines implemented modular learning, a stand-alone approach that encourages self-directed learning (Dangle 2020; Sadiq 2014). To maintain learning continuity, SPAMAST faculty created modules for social work

courses. Although modular learning allows for flexibility, it also gives students more responsibility, which might be difficult if they do not receive enough help (Dejene 2019). It is still unclear how beneficial this method is, particularly in practice-based domains like social work. Although integrating research, policy, and practice is emphasized in the worldwide standard for social work education (IFSW 2020), concerns are raised about how the move to modular learning may affect student participation and results. The objectives of this study are to assess how well modular learning was implemented in social work education during the pandemic, pinpoint the difficulties and lessons that students encountered, and compile their suggestions for enhancing the curriculum and approach in the post-pandemic educational environment.

1 Methodology

This research employed a descriptive-qualitative approach to depict student challenges and lessons from utilizing social work professional modules during the pandemic. Data was collected through validated open-ended interview questionnaires distributed via *Google Forms*. Concurrent analysis was conducted, drawing on pertinent literature. Participants included twenty second- and third-year BS Social Work students from *Sta Maria, Malita, Don Marcelino, and Jose Abad Santos, Davao Occidental, Philippines*. Their responses were coded, mimed, and deductively thematically analyzed. The study was conducted between August and October 2021, with participants' voluntary consent. Trustworthiness and Credibility: The study obtained informed consent from willing participants, resulting in 20 online questionnaire responses. The researcher meticulously coded and analyzed the data to formulate themes. The study's findings were presented at the *National Association of Social Work Education Inc 49th Convention for transferability.* Experts validated the questionnaire to ensure dependability. Theoretical Lens: Grounded in Resiliency theory, the study explored how the pandemic

challenged students, teachers, families, and communities. It delved into internal and external coping mechanisms under the new normal. Resilience theory emphasized adaptive responses to threats, including organizational changes in higher education. This lens facilitated understanding of institutional adjustments in the face of the pandemic.

2 Results and Discussions

This part focuses on the analysis of the interview questionnaire given to the students via online platform and the patterns and themes emerging from the thematic analysis which were presented in *Table 1*. The results were shown in themes corresponding to the statement of the problem.

Table 1: Challenges encountered by students in the modular modality during the pandemic

Major Themes	Coded Ideas
Independent learning	"They are all difficult but it's okay it is still part of learning." "Some of the concept is difficult to understand." "I was pressured to read in advance." "I occasionally love the modular method, but I frequently struggle with it due to the lack of an instructor and classmates" "Modular learning is difficult when there is no teacher to explain lessons or clear any confusion" "The modular method enables me to read ahead, yet certain sessions require teacher support.".
Pressure to fulfill various module deadlines.	"I think the module is difficult for me because of the conflict of schedule with other subjects. Because of the successive subjects and weekly output obligations, I don't remember many lessons.
Students enrolled in statistics, and counseling	I struggled with mathematics and problem solving, so social work statistics were very challenging."

	"For me, the most challenging aspect was counseling, especially identifying issues and offering appropriate guidance." *"Although I'm not comfortable with numbers, I made an effort to understand social work statistics because of its importance in research."*
Students who struggle with vocabulary and reading comprehension.	*"HBSE is difficult due to unfamiliar terms and concepts I struggle to understand"* *"Since some of the lessons in the module are difficult to understand and learning is more difficult than it was previously, I don't particularly love the modular method".* *""I found it hard sometimes to understand everything that is written inside in the module.*
A reliable internet connection	*"So far for me, all social work modules are okay if our connectivity is in good condition."* *"I feel sad when it comes to chasing some deadlines because there many various platforms to approach my module like Facebook, google, etc."* *"I'm struggling because I don't have a phone and I'm having a hard time being active in the online class"* *"Low connectivity can be frustrating at times."* *"It is hard to adjust this new normal particularly when we tackled about internet connectivity."* *"It kind of stressful, in the sense that I reside in an area where internet connectivity is very poor. That I must go out to barangay highway to update and pass my outputs*
lack of teacher input, which leads to boredom in self-study	*"No, I find it difficult, and I was pressured."* *"For me e I enjoyed the modular approach but must better if face to face class"*

	"It was enjoyable at first, but as time went on, I found it harder to appreciate because of my inadequate comprehension in the absence of professors". *"We must learn on our own which is very difficult without the farther explanation of the teacher in actual discussion. Since now and then I preferred in face-to-face interaction"* *"We may not be able to discuss in person"*
difficult for students with other obligations	*Although juggling my jobs might be difficult, I appreciate the courses' flexibility, particularly as a married mother.* *"I can have my time to seek for part time job but its challenging"*

Source: author´s own

The term "module" originally comes from the latin word "modulus" or "measure" which literally refers to the concept of important values or coefficient. When we indicated a particular module, it means that it encompasses an educational information technology and requires mastery from the learners. A modular approach also highly emphasized not only acquiring theoretical knowledge but as well as mastery about the skills and knowledge required to implement a specific course (Kokebayevaa 2015). In this study, modules were given to all students enrolled in *Bachelor of Science in Social Work Program* at the start of first semester 2020-2021.

According to Dangle et al. (2020), modular learning is the most favored type of distance learning. Dejene (2021) on the other hand said that module envelops about a particular area of specialization which measured an extended learning experience; thus, lead to a specific qualification. Dayabig (2021) observed that nowadays, there are many colleges faculty who decide to prepare modules as an alternative to pure online learning delivery. In the practice of modular approach in SPAMAST, teachers taught all

subjects in modular approach. The modules were given at the beginning of the semester and students were given instructions on where to retrieve the modules and where to submit their assignments and tasks. The teachers would act as learning facilitators to students and provide students with instructions via online platform Facebook or google classroom. The results of this study revealed that the students faced the following challenges in the modular approach during this pandemic.

Difficult for students who are not used to independent learning. During the *Enhanced Community Quarantine* (ECQ), educational institutions transitioned from in-person classes to independent and home-based learning. This shift posed challenges for students, as they struggled to adapt to self-directed learning (Dayagbil 2021). In a modular approach, students were required to independently study modules and complete exercises, which often involved pre-reading. This differed from traditional classrooms where teachers provide immediate guidance. The modular approach also demanded additional research efforts. Pokhrel's study (2021) emphasized that altered home conditions affected students' learning processes. Isolated from peers, students were compelled to become self-reliant learners, improving their vocabulary and reading comprehension. The conducive home environment facilitated enhanced focus on studies.

Burden and pressure to comply with multiples module deadlines. The data highlighted the heavy burden and pressure students faced in meeting multiple module deadlines. With all courses adopting a modular approach, one participant mentioned struggling due to scheduling conflicts. Pokhrel (2021) highlighted challenges stemming from module affordability and accessibility during the pandemic. Customized learning materials and intervention policies were suggested solutions. Both minor and major subjects following the modular approach added to students' challenges. Juggling multiple deadlines led to burnout, with one

participant noting the difficulty of retaining lessons due to rapid subject shifts and constant output demands. These findings align with Dayagbil's (2021) observation that students must take ownership of their learning, becoming more self-directed in deciding their focus and allocating study time beyond the classroom.

Self-learning is crucial for students with subject's social work statistics and counseling. The study's findings affirmed the significance of self-learning in a modular approach, especially for challenging subjects like social work statistics and counseling. These subjects demand specific skills and models for application, necessitating innovative learning strategies to decode instructions (Sadiq, N.D.). In this new learning context, students were required to independently read, comprehend, and fulfill tasks without constant teacher guidance, promoting self-direction (Dayagbil 2021). A participant expressed difficulty in social work statistics due to math-related aspects. Although some supplementary resources like videos were provided, the subject's complexity persisted.

Counseling, another subject, posed challenges due to its practical nature. Effective learning required hands-on experience in applying counseling techniques (Pokhrel 2021). Many institutions transitioned away from face-to-face teaching, prompting innovative educational strategies. Authentic assessment and timely feedback emerged as concerns. For subjects like social work statistics and counseling, assessing learning shifted towards showcasing application through outputs like counseling videos and problem-solving demonstrations.

Students with poor reading comprehension and limited vocabulary. Establishing communities for regular interactions, social support, and addressing psycho-social challenges faced by isolated students was emphasized by UNESCO (2021). In an interview, a participant highlighted the difficulty of comprehending the *Human Behavior and Social Environment* (HBSE) subject due to unfamiliar

terminology and complex concepts. Limited vocabulary and prior knowledge in *Psychology* and *Sociology* basics contributed to this challenge. To engage with HBSE, students needed to engage in additional readings and vocabulary enrichment. Other students also expressed struggling to grasp module content, indicative of challenges in self-study without readily available guidance. These findings align with Dangle et al. (2020), who observed students lacking resources and parental guidance, necessitating strategic teaching approaches. To ease learning difficulties, teachers could adopt learner-centered strategies on remote platforms. This study uncovered students' weak language skills, including vocabulary, syntax, spelling, and reading comprehension, leading to unoriginal outputs and instances of plagiarism. Strong reading, comprehension, and vocabulary skills are crucial for writing social case study reports in social work.

Access to stable internet connectivity to download e-modules and additional resources and submission of assignments. Based on the study of Said (2017), inequality and digital divide were exacerbated during the pandemic. There were many students' complaints about the problem of internet connectivity. This implies that there were still several areas in Davao Occidental with no good internet connection, which posed a challenge to the students. Some of the modules were posted online for students to be downloaded since some students lived in remote areas. Submissions of output were also another problem for them. Some students needed to ask for consideration for the late submission of outputs. According to the study of Dayabil (2021), the abrupt shift of learning strategy from face-to-face to online learning modality widened the gap between those with connectivity and those without. The continuing academic engagement had been a challenge for teachers and students because of access to internet connectivity.

Another problem encountered by the students was their lack of gadgets to be used for online learning, for downloading e-

modules or for surfing online resources to help them in their lessons. Some of the students submitted their outputs using their mobile phones which resulted in poor outputs. Additional problem was the use of "screenshot." Students submitted outputs in screenshot. This shows that students had no appropriate gadgets for their studies. There were students who took photos of their outputs with additional creativity by making drawings which was appreciated by the teacher. However, the creativity exerted did not add academic value to the paper's papers. Pokhrel (2021) mentioned that during the pandemic, the educational system and the educators had adopted "Education in Emergency" through various online platforms and were compelled to adopt a system that they were not prepared for. One of the students said that she did not have her own mobile phone and because of that it was difficult for her to participate in online class or download the e-modules. This resulted in frustration to some participants and added stress in their schooling. One participant expressed that "It kind of stressful, in the sense that I reside in an area where internet connectivity is very poor. That I must go out to barangay highway to update and pass my outputs".

Feelings of boredom in self-learning due to lack of feedback from teachers. Another significant finding of this study showed that there were learners who felt bored with the self-learning mode due to limited feedback from teachers. Based on the study of Dayagbil (2021) there were students who said that they did not receive immediate response from their teachers if their outputs were received or need revisions. One of the participants emphasized that "at the beginning it was good at all, but the day's going till this moment and time I have never enjoyed due to my poor understanding of the concepts without teachers". Based on the literature, there were plenty of students who developed psychological and emotional distress. As a matter of fact, this was the reason why they could not engage productively. The study recommended further explore the online homeschooling

environment among students. Since we do see the actual learning space of the students, we never had much idea of the causes of their boredom during the learning process.

The result of this study was also supported by the literature which discussed that the schools shut down did not only affect the students but also their professors and their families (Elfirdoussi et al. 2020). Since teachers were also bombarded with students' outputs online and with the reality that internet connectivity was a challenge even in the parameters of the school. It was expected that there would be limited interaction between the teachers to the students. It was expected that students would read their modules and provide their responses based on the assigned tasks. Although students could send messages to their teachers through Facebook messengers or emails, unlike face-to-face method, feedback could not be given immediately which encouraged the students to learn. In this modular type of learning teacher's feedback was difficult to do. UNESCO stated that one of the recommendations in this COVID 19 pandemic was the possibly of creating communities among teachers, parents, and school's managers where "*loneliness*" or "*helplessness*" can be discussed. There was a need to facilitate the sharing of experiences and discussion on coping strategies and learning difficulties (UNESCO, n.d.). In the interview questionnaire given, many students wanted to go back to the face-to-face classes where they could hear the explanations and discussion with their teachers. They still preferred the face-to-face interaction to the modular approach. In support to these findings, the *Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in 2018*, discussed the importance of module evaluation as basic to upgrade the teaching strategy and to investigate how the learning opportunities for students will be improved (*Academic Practice Department* 2019).

Challenging students with motherhood responsibilities and those engage in online business. The purpose of credit-based modular curriculum structures is to attempt to address the needs of many diverse groups of students to promote greater flexibility and choices in managing their studies (French 2015). There were SPAMAST students who were already mothers and had their own responsibilities in the family. One of the participants said that "*I must say that I have both enjoyed the modules but at the same time I usually felt pressured. I am enjoying the modular approach because it provided time conducive for me, especially since I am already married and a mother but to balance my role is challenging*". Since there was no division between the home and the school, the roles of the mother were also affected since they needed to balance between their time at home with their children and as a student with deadlines to meet in school. The study of Pokhrel (2021) noted that learners with a fixed mindset will have difficulty on how to adapt and adjust whereas those learners with growth mindset will quickly adapt to new learning environment. Some of the students also used the time during the pandemic to earn additional income by engaging in online selling. Elfirdoussi et al. (2020) said that the modular approach is quite challenging for the students to balance their time, hence, their school performance was affected.

Table 2: *Lessons gained by the students in utilizing social work modules*

Major Themes	Coded Ideas
Enhanceactivelearning experiences and self-motivation	*"I learn to study by myself." "Discovering that I am capable of challenging my emotional, social and intellectual skills"*
Improve Outcome Based SW Education	*Students learn social work concepts, HBSE, relationship building, dealing with clients, disaster management, laws, policies, and principles. Students learn how to prepare for case study and conducted. counseling through video activities*
Students enrolled in statistics, and counseling	*I struggled with mathematics and problem solving, so social work statistics were very challenging."*

	"For me, the most challenging aspect was counseling, especially identifying issues and offering appropriate guidance." *"Although I'm not comfortable with numbers, I made an effort to understand social work statistics because of its importance in research."*
Increased flexibility and adaptability among learners	*"Social module is great because we have no internet. connectivity"*
Appreciation to self-learning method as best alternative response in the pandemic and local context	*"Very practical and relevant"* *"Cheapest method of learning while also cultivating the habit of reading"*

Source: : author´s own

Another result of the interview questionnaire with the participants revealed that there were various lessons students gained from the utilization of social work modules. First, they reported that this methodology enhanced active learning experiences and self-motivation. It was also evident that the modular approach improved the Outcome Based SW Education. On the part of the learners, this helped them increase flexibility and adaptability to the current pandemic situation. There were many students who appreciated this self-learning method as the best alternative response in the new normal that they could not be affected by virus transmission and highly responsive to local context of Davao Occidental. It was also because of this modular approach that these students managed their own time and improved self-responsibility in terms of task accomplishment. The learners found this method as the best alternative option in this new normal and highly favorable to students with online business and those who are currently working.

Enhance active learning experiences and self-motivation. The study also had positive remarks of the modular approach as it showed that through this new method of learning the students active learning and self-motivation was enhanced by the process. In this study the participants narrated through the modular approach the students become active learners, and they were self-motivated to learn the lessons by themselves. As stated by Bento et al. (2021) the overall challenge can be defined as the need to provide quality education while observing public health policies. Since there is no choice but to continue learning while in this pandemic the modular approach is the only possible method that can keep up with this new normal. One of the students wrote that "*I discovered that I am capable of challenging my emotional, social and intellectual skills*". Based on the literature modular approach to teaching allowed students to feel that they have sense of control over their own learning. Furthermore, they also accepted greater responsibility for learning, eventually this led to maturity on the part of the learners. Dejene (2019) said the purpose of modular education is for mature students.

Improve Outcome Based Social Work Education. Based on the literature the process of transition to modular training programs requires a more advance preparation on the part of those who designed the curriculum (Kokebayevaa 2015). The modules in social work are designed per subjects which focus on the specific course outcomes of the subject. According to the response of other participants using social work modules the students acquired knowledge with social work concepts. Similarly, Dayagbil (2021) cited that the challenge of the pandemic is how to make balance between relevant basic competencies for the students to acquire and the teachers desire to achieve the intended outcomes of the curriculum. Some of the responses of the students expressed how they also appreciated relationship building, dealing with clients in the community and moreover they also know about disaster management, laws and policies and principles. In fact, most of the students' output presented realistic case studies coming from the COVID experiences and

experiences with their family and community. The study of Dejene (2019) explained how modular approach becomes an emerging trend in educational thinking which shifted from traditional method of instruction to the paradigm of outcome-based learning.

Increased flexibility and adaptability among learners. The modular approach also contributed to the increased flexibility and adaptability among learners with the changing context of learning brought by the pandemic. Since there are areas in Davao Occidental with limited internet connectivity one of the students who responded to the questionnaire expressed his appreciation that because of the modular approach he can continue learning despite this pandemic. According to Dayagbigl (2021) the idea of flexibility in the next academic calendar must be considered because it is still uncertain when this pandemic crisis will be contained.By utilizing a module, students can still acquire knowledge and learn even if their community cannot be reached by the internet. They usually downloaded the module in the center of their place where they can have accessed internet for instance in Jose Abad Santos Davao Occidental and shared the module to their classmates. It is a reality globally that the are many colleges and universities which disrupt face to face teaching. They introduced innovation and implemented alternative educational systems and assessment strategies (Pokhrel, n.d.)

Appreciation to self-learning method as best alternative response. Since the Philippines is in the process of adaptation to the effects of COVID 19 specifically the educational sector thus the new strategies adapted by educators and also active involvement of various stakeholders are the important forces of this success (Dangle et al., 2020) There are many students who appreciated the modular strategy of teaching. One of the participants expressed that it is "very practical and relevant" because of the pandemic. Based on the study of Dayagbil (2021) it is a call for university to be resilient in this time of pandemic. The importance of resiliency in the educational system is crucial for this institution to have the ability to overcome challenges in times of crisis. Applying the concept of resiliency of the educational system refers to the ability of these colleges to overcome challenges of all kinds of trauma, tragedy, crises and bounce back stronger, wiser, and more powerful. The call for resilient universities in times of crisis is highlighted due to the COVID 19 crisis. In this light, the educational system must learn how to prepare, develop plans to move forward and address the new normal after crisis effects. To do this, education needs to address teaching and learning continuity amid and beyond the pandemic. In the case of SPAMAST and specifically the BSSW program, which just recently opened the COVID- 19 pandemic is like a problem which the program needs to be solved and poses a challenge to the program continuity. The fact that the program continues despite the pandemic showed the resilience of the students to keep going whatever the problems in their personal and community context. The institution tends to be responsive to this need by changing its own teaching strategy to be able to respond to the needs of the learners in various communities.

In the account of one of the BSSW students she said that the modular approach is the "*cheapest method of learning while also cultivating the habit of reading*". Given that many of the students who are enrolled in the program come from low socio-economic backgrounds, the purpose of the module really addressed their needs of getting education at such minimal cost on their part. Based on the study of the *United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO), this pandemic has been recognized as seriously impacting the educational system worldwide (Elffirdousi, 2020).

Table 3: Students' recommendations to improve the learning content of the module and modular approach

Major Themes	Coded Ideas
Improve the learning resources	*"I have no suggestions for improvement, as the modules*

	already provide all the necessary information."
Tandem the methodology with flexible learning	"Some of the students have no internet connectivity that's why it is okay". "It can be a good idea to continue students' learning and also help prevent the spread of the virus" "I will recommend it to the other students. But if they experience the same difficulties, I think it should be a flexible learning"
Improve internet connection and provision of other support like gadgets and cash assistance for load	"To have router to have a better connectivity." "Since not all of us have access to internet connection, everything inside the modules should be detailed" ""What we need most is understanding and consideration from our instructors, especially when meeting academic requirements."
Augmentation of support and training for community learning facilitators like family and other members of community	Support from a family which is supplies for studies and finance" "It depends now on each of the students and the student's family to do their part and responsibility. "I'm already ok with the current setting, however some are experiencing difficulties in accessing the modules online as it requires monetary expenses. "For me, the modular should be delivered to every barangay so that it will not be difficult for the distant students to pick up their module"

Source: author's own

Table 3 displays students' suggestions to enhance module content and the modular approach. Major themes include: 1) Enhancing learning resources, 2) Combining modular approach with other methods or flexible learning, 3) Improving internet connectivity and providing support like gadgets and financial assistance, and 4) Strengthening training and support for community learning facilitators, including family and community members.

CONCLUSION

Improve learning resources. Students' feedback on the questionnaire highlighted the need for improvements in the modules they were provided. As these modules were hastily prepared due to the pandemic and lacked thorough editing and revision, students called for input from subject experts and technical panels. A participant suggested that modules should be more detailed and include clear explanations for better understanding. Given the importance of the *Social Work course* in board exams, the content and strategy of modules should align with licensure exam expectations. Another student noted the cost-effectiveness and reading-promoting nature of the modular approach. However, they recommended enhancements such as more visuals and examples to aid comprehension, accommodating diverse learning styles, and refining assessment methods. Authentically evaluating students' work and learning progress in a home-based setting posed challenges for educators (Pokhrel, 2021). In the study of Dayagbil (2021) it was emphasized that students and teachers had adapted to remote teaching and learning based on institutional policies during lockdowns. While students generally felt the provided modules were comprehensive, one response supported the modular approach for its suitability during the pandemic, with no specific improvement suggestions due to perceived content sufficiency.

Improve internet connection and provision of other support like gadgets and cash assistance for load. Most of the students' recommendations addressed the necessity to improve internet connection in their own community and provision of support by the institution like gadgets and cash assistance for the load to their mobile phones. Amir et.al (2020) mentioned that distance learning challenges covers external factors such as the unstable internet connection, having extra financial burden for the internet quota and internal factors like time management

and difficulty to focus. Both external and internal factors resulted in difficulty for the students to comply with the requirements on time.

The lack of internet connectivity in their areas also made it difficult for them to conduct research or get resources for the subjects. Although instruction and content were given the modules, this still requires them to research further about the subject matter. Even for some students using google translate becomes one of the common activities since many of them speaks vernacular and had problem in translating their ideas into English. Using the technology to draft their papers in English with the aid of the technology clearly becomes a visible problem. Some students who are from the Indigenous group are greatly affected and is visible in the output that they presented and submitted in the online platform.

Furthermore, the participants of this study shared a common sentiment to seek help in improving the internet connectivity in Davao Occidental and it is possible to aid and support the students in terms of gadgets or cash assistance with their load for mobile phone or internet use. Since most of the students are living in remote areas and coming from Indigenous communities, they are the ones who really had problems with internet connection. This COVID-19 pandemic has uncovered large inequalities in access to technology, for instance the divide between rich and poor, rural, and urban, girls and boys, across and within countries (UNICEF, 2020). One of the responses in the interview expressed that there should be routers to have better connectivity in their area. Similarly, one of the participants said that "*since not all of us have access to internet connection, everything inside the modules should be detailed so that we will no longer find other sources from the internet just to find answers for our activities. We have limited access.*"

Another student said that "*I firmly believe that if a person wants to learn, s/he will face and accept the challenges and hardships that may encounter along the way. It is obvious that generally, students strive hard in this*

pandemic times due to low internet connectivity or no signal at all, no available gadgets, no source of income and other difficulties. And I guess the major assistance as a student like me needs is the consideration from our respective instructors, especially in complying with all the necessary requirements. For there are really moments that I felt burnt out and drained while performing the multi tasks I must accomplish, and with all the external factors that hinder my studies". This only validated the findings of Pokharel (2021) which mentioned that many countries have substantial issues with a reliable internet connection and access to digital devices. Since the landscape of Davao Occidental is mountainous and some areas are highly remote the internet connectivity poses a great problem. Clearly, one of the responses of the students strongly expressed that "*we badly needed the good connection and load so that we could participate in the activities that assign to us*". These findings supported the claimed of Dangle, et al. (2020) that learning using printed and digital modules emerges as the most preferred distance learning method but there should be consideration of the learners in rural areas where internet is not accessible.

Augmentation of support and training for community learning facilitators like family and other members of community. The significance of the support for the family and community members as learning facilitators was also mentioned in this study. One of the responses from the participants calls for support from their family when it comes to supplies for studies and finance. In the account of the participants, she recommended for the continuous used of module but the with the support of the family and community. When asked if the modular approach will continue even after pandemic she responded "*Absolutely yes, whatever means of earning education could be possible if provided by right motivation and assistance from the family, schools and government. The best suggestion that I can give is, I think, already been provided by the government. For despite these trying times,*

education and learning of students resume and continue. It is all left and depend now on each of the student and student's family to do their part and responsibilities". Pokhrel (2021) mentioned that lack of parental guidance for young learners was another challenge since some parents are working. This is added by physical workspaces and conducive areas for learning. Some of the students reported that they had problems related to quarantine issues and even death among members of the family which is beyond their capacity to respond. The call for government assistance will really facilitate learning in the community during this pandemic.

The study of Aksan (2021) supported the result as it was mentioned that any member of the family can aid and guide and serve as para-teachers. Training, workshops, and seminars should be provided for the teachers to improve themselves and academic performance for the students. Participant number 17 said that "I am already ok with the current setting; however, some are experiencing difficulties in accessing the modules online as it requires monetary expenses. If only there were philanthropies that would give cash assistance to those having difficulties, it would be a big help". This claimed is supported by Dangle et al. (2020) who stated that the major challenges that emerged were lack of school funding in the production and delivery of modules and the participants prevailing challenges in terms of resources, preparedness, and communication. A participant proposed the distribution of modules to every barangay to facilitate access for distant students. While SPAMAST initially delivered modules to communities, the ongoing lockdowns and the virus's spread disrupted this distribution, impacting both faculty and modular delivery.

Implications of the study

During this study, the following implications to social work education are reflected by the researcher and students from the data which highlights the improvement of the Institutional Online learning resources for the students and faculty of SPAMAST. In addition, there should be tandem teaching or improve flexible learning methods. Moreover, there should be support for students in terms of gadgets and cash assistance for online internet use. Finally, there should be provision of support to the training for community learning facilitators like family and other members of community. The study also had further recommended to the National Association of Social Work Education to build the capacity of social work educators on developing appropriate and effective professional social work modules to be utilized by social work schools. Finally, the researcher recommended to SPAMAST Bachelor of Science Program to evaluate the individual content and delivery of module with the assistance of the Office of Academic Affairs. Furthermore, there is a need to conduct future research on the experiences of students learning in their home and faculty experiences in using the modules as one of the teaching strategies.

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