

**DISPOSITION OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ONLINE LEARNING: A
BASIS FOR MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTION**

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ABSTRACT

The spread of the Coronavirus disrupted the face-to-face classes of schools, which led to the implementation of online learning for continued education. This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological approach that aims to determine the disposition and explore the experiences of the Grade 7 high school students of Antipolo Science High School (ASHS). Convenience sampling was used for the selection of the participants wherein they were selected based on their availability. The mode of data gathering was through a zoom meeting with the participants and utilizing a semi-structured questionnaire. After the data analysis using Tesch's steps of coding, the researcher identified the following emerging themes: (1) implementation of online classes; (2) internet connection during online classes; (3) distractions encountered during online classes; (4) coping mechanisms during online classes; and (5) support system during online classes. The data were analyzed with literature and patterned with the Adaptation Model of Callista Roy and Transition Model of Afaf Ibrahim Meleis, the frameworks that further supported the findings of the study. The result obtained are of great significance to the students, teachers and school administrators, future researchers, and ASHS community for they will be informed of their situation. The results of the study served as a basis in the formulation of appropriate mental health interventions which may be of great help to students.

Keywords: *blended learning, learning disposition, Mental health, online learning*

INTRODUCTION

The spread of the Coronavirus or Sars-Cov-2 led to a global pandemic in the early year of 2020. According to the World Health Organization (2020), the transmission of the virus is through small droplets from the infected person's nose or mouth. With its easy mode of transmission from one person to the other, it caused a rise in cases in different countries around the world. This pandemic caused each affected country to observe strict quarantine measures to prevent transmission. According to UNESCO (2020), there are over 200 million Filipino students or learners across academic institutions who must stay at home and need to comply with the Philippine government's quarantine protocols. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, most governments across the globe have decided to impose stricter quarantine measures. As a result, there are a lot of learners who were greatly affected by this mandate. To facilitate learning even this time of the pandemic, educational systems need to adapt online learning or e-learning to continue providing education to their students, despite the closure of schools caused by this pandemic. As quarantine and strict protocols were being implemented, online learning became the most feasible way to continue learning at a distance.

With the uncertainties in events of this pandemic, the education system was shaken. It is very important for educators and learners to adapt and embrace online learning. Interaction of teachers and students had become very important to gain learning and satisfaction, especially in online learning. From face-to-face classes to online learning, the transition towards the new normal education involved the utilization of modular, blended, synchronous, and asynchronous learning methods. Through these learning options, high school students may now overcome different barriers in online learning. Hence, the researcher was inspired to investigate the disposition of high school students in online learning because these changes may have affected their adaptation to online learning which needs to be addressed. Careful and strategic planning should be considered in each of the academic institutions as part of the preparation. Having a background on students' disposition in online learning would be extremely helpful in the formulation of mental health plans to help them adapt to the new modes of learning. The present

situation entails so much cooperation among students, faculty, staff, and society to overcome this challenge in the education system.

With the sudden change of approach in the education system due to unfavorable circumstances, the use of technology has become more crucial. It is because the education system is considered one of the most affected areas since there must be continued access to education despite a major global health crisis. The shift from face-to-face learning offers an advantage to both institutions and students in terms of flexibility on time and place. However, the implementation of the system is without various difficulties that affect its effectiveness. Thus, the students' disposition and involvement should be evaluated as a basis for a mental health plan.

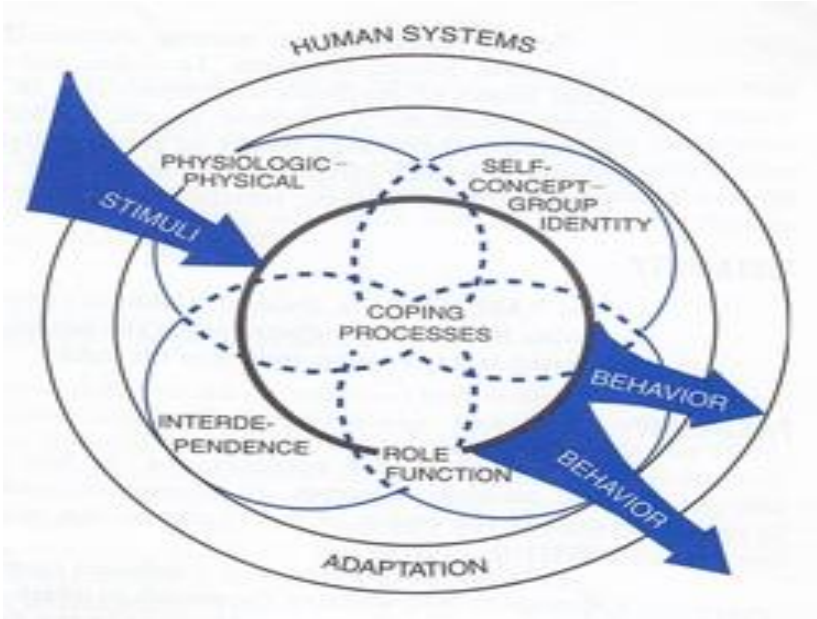
The utilization of the internet has been widely used not only in communication but also in various fields such as education. However, as the use of technology increases, the demands from students and teachers also increase, which includes updating their skills and becoming more literate in computers and technology. Embracing the current situation of the educational system with the integration of e-learning will be significantly helpful to students and teachers.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the adaptation of Callistra Roy's model on the Human System and Afaf Meleis's Transition System.

Figure 1

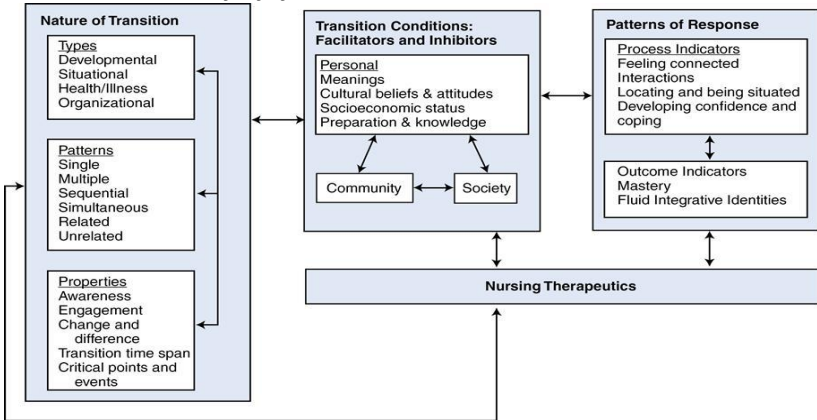
Paradigm of the Study



The adaptation model of Callista Roy served as a guide for this study. According to Roy (1984), people both individually and in groups have an adaptation system, complete with coping processes that maintain adaptation and promote person and environment transformation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people experience changes in their normal routines, activities, environment, and communication with other people. It is the transition from traditional face-to-face classes to online classes. Based on the theory of Roy, stimulus from the environment is the experience of a person. Concerning the study, the COVID-19 pandemic is the learning context. She also discussed how the physiological, psychological, and social integrity interrelate with each other through perception. She further discussed how these factors affect their responses which is the behavior, the coping processes and the adaptation to the situation become the lived experience of a person and a basis for a disposition in online learning. A response, either adaptive or ineffective, is then made and adapted (Alligood, 2014).

Figure 2

Transition Model of Afaf's Meleis



The transition model of Afaf Meleis also guided the researcher to further analyze the result of the study. According to Meleis, the theory aims to characterize healthy transitions as non-problematic mastery of actions, attitudes, cues, and symbols linked with new roles and identities (Alligood, 2014). The researcher used this transition model and adaptation model since the grade 7 high school students are in a critical transition from elementary to high school. Additionally, the mandate to suspend face-to-face classes made the high school students experience changes in the learning environment. According to the theory, the learners experience the transition from elementary to high school due to the implementation of online classes to continue their learning process.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon and the disposition of high school students in online learning, thus establishing a basis in the formulation of a mental health plan.

More specifically, the study aims to answer the following problems:

1. What are the experiences of high school students in online learning?

2. What are the problems encountered by the students in the implementation of online learning?
3. What are the coping mechanisms of high school students in online learning?
4. What framework can be formulated to enhance students' coping ability during a pandemic?

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The conduct of the study among the high school students of ASHS was possible because of the support and cooperation of the school principal, school advisers, students, and parents. The participants were cooperative and willing to share their thoughts/dispositions in online learning. The parents of the participants also allowed their daughters and sons to be part of the study. In the conduct of the said study, the limitations encountered include the difficulty in communicating between participants since all interactions were conducted electronically. In addition, during the collection of data, the participants and researcher experienced connection problems that affected the flow of the interview and interrupted the participants' mid-response.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research used qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Grade 7 high school students of the Antipolo Science High School in online learning. Through this approach, the researcher was able to determine the experiences and dispositions of high school students of Antipolo Science High School because this approach discusses the experiences of a person in each situation (Hirsch, 2015).

Participants of the Study

The participants who were involved in this study are grade 7 high school students from Antipolo Science High School. The researcher

selected the participants using the purposive sampling method wherein all participants must have experienced the phenomenon under study and must be able to articulate how it is like to have lived that experience (Polit Beck, 2003).

The inclusion criteria for the participants are the following: (1) grade 7 high school students of Antipolo Science High School; (2) currently enrolled in academic school year 2020-2021 and attending online classes; (3) have active Facebook Messenger accounts or Zoom application account; and (4) students who solely rely on mobile data and have no or unstable Wi-Fi connection. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria for the selection of the participants are the following: (1) students who failed to accomplish the informed consent form in the given time frame; and (2) students who failed to accomplish the audio/video recording form in the specified time frame before the interview proper.

The researcher started gathering data from the three grade 7 high school students who met the given inclusion criteria as the first batch of interviewees until the interview reached the point of saturation to produce factual and well-reasoned results that supported the study. Factors that did not influence the selection of participants are the following: (1) age; (2) gender; (3) religion; and (4) academic ranking.

A total of seven interviews were conducted in July 2021. The interviews were conducted for the duration of 20 to 30 minutes using Zoom. Four of the interviewees were female and three were male, all in the age range of 12-13 (refer to table 1). All participants are grade 7 students of Antipolo Science High School in Antipolo, Rizal attending online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1

Participants' Age and Gender, and Duration of the Interviews

Participant Number	Age	Gender	Date of the Interview	Interview Duration	Application Used
1	13	Female	July 12, 2021	21 minutes	Zoom Meeting
2	13	Female	July 12, 2021	21 minutes	Zoom Meeting
3	12	Male	July 12, 2021	20 minutes	Zoom Meeting
4	13	Male	July 13, 2021	21 minutes	Zoom Meeting
5	13	Male	July 13, 2021	20 minutes	Zoom Meeting
6	12	Female	July 13, 2021	20 minutes	Zoom Meeting
7	13	Female	July 13, 2021	23 minutes	Zoom Meeting

Instrumentation

The study used an interview protocol as its data-gathering tool. The research study was conducted in Antipolo Science High School in Antipolo, Rizal. However, due to the present situation because of the pandemic, the researcher was restricted in conducting a face-to-face interview, considering the health protocols and standard measures of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. As a result, the mode of data gathering was executed through video calls via Zoom, Google Meet, and/or Facebook Messenger by the researcher with the participants. All the information gathered were kept confidential and were used solely for educational purposes.

Data Gathering Procedure

First, the researcher wrote a letter to the school principal thru the class adviser of Antipolo Science High School in Antipolo, Rizal regarding the conduct of the study. Upon the approval of the letter of request by

the school principal, the researcher wrote a letter to the participants' parents since the participants are minors. The participants were then asked to sign the consent forms for participation in the study and video/audio recorded interview through Google forms, returned to the researcher's email address. A personal Zoom link was sent to the participants' individual Gmail address after they signed and returned the consent forms before the actual conduct of the interview. The researcher also provided prepaid data worth Php 100.00 to each participant to be used during their interview. In case problems occur in the Zoom meeting, a Google Meet link was prepared to be sent to the participants as part of the researcher's backup plan. The researcher coded and analyzed the data by utilizing the recorded zoom interview, audio recordings, and his notes. A pilot testing was done on two or three students of the same grade level. The data given by the participants in the pilot testing were not included in the study, but it served as a guide on executing the interview for the researcher. During the interview, the participants were asked to open their cameras to further document how they responded throughout the interview. The researcher created field notes on the participants' responses during the interview. It is also important to note that there were no repeated interviews since the researcher based on the point of saturation where overall response of the participants had similarities. Throughout the interview, the researcher used Filipino and English as his language to gather information.

Data Analysis

The interview responses were analyzed meticulously, presented narratively, and organized carefully in themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Experiences of the High School Students in Online Learning

The students' responses were centered on the implementation of online classes, particularly stressing their experiences, perceptions, and insights about online classes as implemented in their school during the COVID-19 pandemic. They shared their experiences regarding their

adjustments when transitioning from elementary to the new mode of online learning in high school, how they felt about online lectures, then they gave their opinions on its effectiveness. All the participants gave their comparison of online classes with face-to-face classes and provided an explanation why they prefer having face-to-face classes as their learning method rather than attending online classes at their homes. They also mentioned how the implementation of online classes caused them to miss some experiences unique in high school life. The sudden transition from traditional face-to-face classes into online classes was perceived difficult by the participants. They shared that they had a different approach during their elementary years face-to-face than in their high school online. However, despite having some adjustment difficulties, most participants stated that they were able to adjust, and they are trying to cope with the new set up, which is online learning. They also mentioned the lack of available gadgets like a laptop during online classes. It is also one of the reasons why it is difficult for them to adjust to online learning. Despite their difficulties, the participants are trying to manage and attend online classes as they perceived learning as important, especially during this pandemic. As they expressed their experiences in online classes, most of the participants also compared it with their experiences during their face-to-face classes. They said that they prefer face-to-face classes as they could have interactions with their classmates and teachers. They could easily ask questions during the lecture in the traditional face-to-face classes. Additionally, they explained that they are more focused on face-to-face classes mode because there are distractions in their home that sometimes disrupt their focus in learning.

II. Problems Encountered by the Students in the Implementation of the Online Learning

Among the problems faced by the students in the implementation of online learning were internet connection problems and distractions during online classes.

Internet Connection Problem. Internet connection plays a very important role in the implementation of online classes based on the

responses of the participants. The “internet connection problems during online classes” emerged since the students experienced sudden disconnection during online classes. One of the challenges the participants mentioned while attending online classes is the internet connection problem. Most of them use mobile data as their source of internet connection. They verbalized that it is quite expensive because they need to reload at least Php 100.00 every two to three days. The location and signal of the participants are the factors that caused the instability of their internet connection. Some participants do not have Wi-Fi, while some has an unstable Wi-Fi connection. They stated that their source of internet connection is mostly mobile data during their online classes. Even though the participants utilize mobile data, they are still experiencing internet connection problems. There is also an instance wherein the participants experienced brown-out in their area for a couple of weeks because of the typhoon. This is the reason why they were not able to attend online classes during that period.

Distractions Encountered During Online Classes. Because classes are conducted online, the participants used their homes as their learning environment, distracting them in their online classes. The researcher named this theme “distractions encountered during online classes” since the participants shared that the distractions within their environment, their responsibilities, and tasks at home affected their focus and interrupted their lectures. They said that they experienced environmental distractions from their family members such as their siblings making noise, their responsibilities at home like assisting their siblings and parents, and the environment noises such as a dog barking and rooster crowing.

III. Coping Mechanisms of High School Students in Online Learning

Coping Mechanisms During Online Classes. The researcher called this theme “coping mechanisms during online classes” from the participants shared routines and activities to cope with online classes. They mentioned that attending online classes was quite difficult compared to face-to-face classes. However, they were able to adjust and manage to attend online classes because they found these mechanisms helpful in

their coping with online classes. The participants shared that they utilized Google Search, Brain, and YouTube as their means to understand well the lectures online, in case they miss their online lectures due to some reasons. They make it a point that they will be able to cope with the missed lectures because they wanted to pass their subjects. They also mentioned that they try to watch movies, play gadgets, and bond with their families as well to relax and somehow forget how difficult it is to attend online classes. They also shared that whenever performance tasks were given as part of their requirement in school, they make sure to do it ahead of time and they try to manage their time properly. Nevertheless, they verbalized that they were able to cope with online classes with the help of these activities and routines.

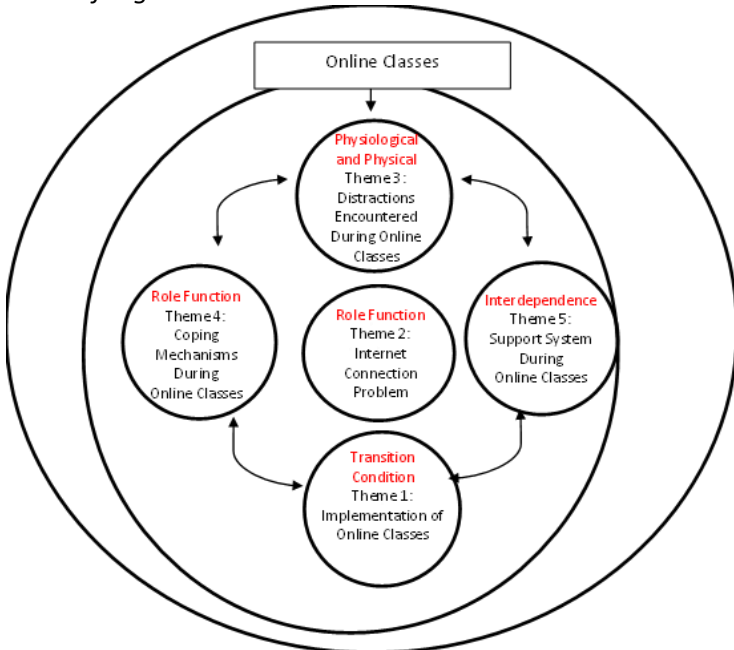
Support System During Online Classes. Support system plays a vital role in one's accomplishment of such activities or coping with situations. Being able to receive support from the participants' significant other made the participants feel worthy especially during this time of the pandemic. This theme was named the "support system during online classes" because the participants mentioned that their families, friends, and teachers significantly helped them while they attend online classes. When they cannot understand their lessons or lectures very well, they ask help from their family members at home. They shared that their father, mother, and siblings are always there, willing to teach them their lessons if they find them difficult. Sometimes, when their family members are not available to teach them, they try to have self-study. They also shared that their teachers in school were very kind and supportive of their studies. They could ask questions from their teachers who are always accommodating when they have questions to ask through Facebook Messenger. The participants also shared that their friends motivate them to finish their schoolwork. They found their interaction with their peers helpful as they share common goals in accomplishing specific tasks in their online classes. The participants also verbalized that the presence of their support systems while they attended classes, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, helped them overcome the difficulties in online classes.

IV. Framework to Enhance Students' Coping Ability During Pandemic

From the findings of the study, the researcher was able to formulate a framework based on the Adaptation Model of Callista Roy and Transition Model of Afaf Ibrahim Meleis. As shown in figure 3, the immediate implementation of online classes (theme 1), in response to the government's mandate that prohibits face-to-face classes, is the transition condition that the high school students have experienced this COVID-19 pandemic. Physiological and Physical (theme 3) Role Function (theme 4), and Interdependence (theme 5) are interrelated factors that greatly affected how the high school students view their online learning. As they were exposed to the said transition condition, students were able to adapt and continue to move forward despite the difficulties they encountered. As they continue to adapt to the said environment, interdependence plays a very important role in the transition of high school students.

Figure 2

Disposition of High School Students



CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic was the situational change that led to the experience and disposition the participants shared about their online learning. The participants had trouble adjusting to online classes as they transitioned from elementary to high school. In addition, they had experienced internet connection problems due to poor signal and usage of mobile data just to be able to attend online classes.

They had several difficulties in adjusting to online classes compared to the traditional face-to-face classes. The participants preferred face-to-face classes as they were able to interact with their teachers and classmates more. Moreover, the participants also experienced a loss of focus because of environmental noise and responsibilities at home. These experiences are recognized as a physiological-physical and role adaptive mode. As the students transitioned from the traditional face-to-face classes into online learning, they were able to adapt and surmount this change in their learning environment. They also shared their coping mechanisms to cope with online classes. Additionally, they stressed the benefits of relaxation to cope with their difficulties on online classes and the importance of having support systems while they were attending classes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following are hereby recommended:

1. The school heads may consider the results of this study in planning for actions to assist students in coping with the challenges associated with online instruction.
2. Teachers may integrate appropriate strategies to assist students in dealing with the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. School guidance counselors may consider planning for activities that will assist students in coping with the difficulties in online learning.
4. Future researchers may consider conducting a parallel study with a wider scope.

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