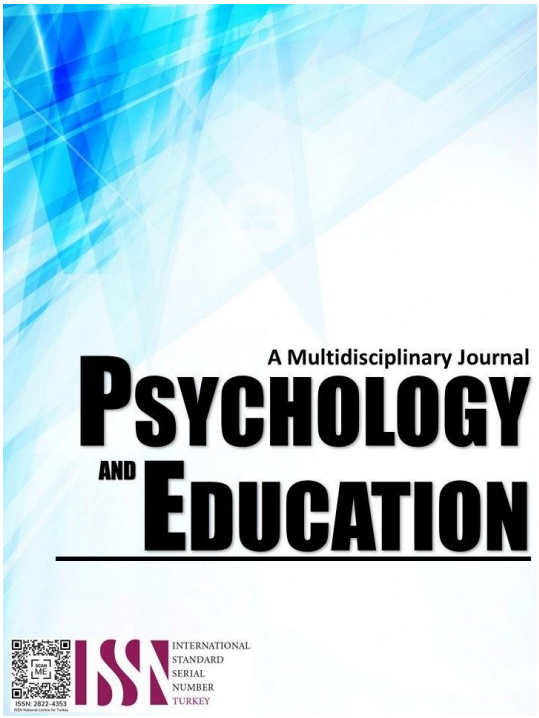
CHANNELING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES, AND COPING STRATEGIES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN BLENDED LEARNING: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY



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Research Article

Channeling the Learning Experiences, Challenges, and Coping Strategies of College Students in Blended Learning: A Quantitative Study

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Abstract

The study aimed to determine college students' perceived learning experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in the blended learning modality. A descriptive research design was used in this study. The investigation was conducted in Notre Dame of Midsayap College to one hundred (100) college students enrolled in blended learning modality for the academic year 2022-2023. A researcher-made questionnaire was used to gather data. Frequency and percentage distribution, mean and standard deviation, t-test and ANOVA, and Pearson-r correlation were used in treating data. With unprecedented events and rapid development, higher education institutions focus on providing and improving blended learning services practically. The study found that the experiences encountered by college students in blended learning had low active participation in online and onsite activities. The respondents needed help to handle various tasks and activities. However, respondents have different coping strategies to manage with difficulties, such as having time for relaxation and breaks during blended learning. The study also revealed a significant difference in the overall learning experiences of the respondents in terms of sex, age, and course. Hence, respondents shared the same experiences and struggles during the blended modality.

Keywords: *learning experiences, challenges, coping strategies, blended learning*

Introduction

In higher education, blended learning has gained popularity as a means of combining in-person and virtual learning opportunities. The unique fusion of these two modalities may improve student learning and engagement while giving them more flexibility and convenience. Further study is, however, required to fully understand the benefits of blended learning, especially as seen by the students. Our goal in this study is to investigate how college students have learned through blended learning, emphasizing how they see the advantages and difficulties of this methodology. We can find ways to enhance this teaching strategy and raise student performance by better grasping what blended learning students encounter.

According to researchers and practitioners, the quality of learning experiences, learning instruction, learning technologies/tools, and applied pedagogies are just a few of the factors that need to be considered when building blended learning experiences. As a result, since 2000, they have concentrated on looking into various blended learning approaches. Even after 21 years of study and research, there are still a number of issues and unresolved concerns surrounding blended learning, such as the calibre of the instructional materials and their design, the culture's resistance to this method, and the overload teachers experience when implementing it. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought attention to even more difficulties with blended learning. In particular, foreign colleges and institutions across the globe were required to implement several health-related measures, including smaller class numbers.

Therefore, they combined online and offline learning to maintain their courses for both on-campus and off-campus experiences. For instance, several primary schools adopted blended learning with the Moodle platform to ensure the continuity of instruction in response to the attempt made by the Indonesian government to implement physical distance during the COVID-19 pandemic in all areas, including education. Several educators expressed apprehensions regarding implementing BL experiences, citing a need for more infrastructure and competencies as reasons and urging more research in this area. According to several international organizations, including UNESCO and the ILO, one of the top goals for creating future-proof educational institutions is teacher professional development for blended learning.

Research Questions

This research aimed to investigate the learning experience of college students in blended learning. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perceived experiences of the respondents on blended learning?
2. What are the challenges encountered by the respondents on blended learning?
3. What are the coping strategies employed by the respondents on blended learning?
4. Is there a significant difference in the overall learning experiences of the respondents in blended learning when grouped according to sex, ages, and course?

Literature Review

In Collaço's (2017) focus groups, students define student engagement as being present and attentive, interaction with peers and

teachers, and enjoyment with the learning tasks. Based on these findings, Collaço (2017) characterizes student engagement as consisting of behavioral, interpersonal, and affective components that need to be addressed if an authentic engagement is desired.

There are various advantages of learning with peers in a blended learning setting. First off, it can offer chances for peer communication and cooperation, which raises motivation and engagement levels among students (Kirschner & Erkens, 2013). According to Nordmann et al. (2018), it can also foster a sense of community among students, which can improve the learning environment and aid in the development of social skills. Lastly, it can give students the chance to pick up knowledge from one another, which can strengthen their comprehension of the material (Strayer, 2012).

In blended learning contexts, student engagement and achievement are significantly influenced by their enjoyment of studying alongside their peers. According to several research studies (Nordmann et al., 2018; Strayer, 2012), students express great satisfaction when collaborating with their peers in blended learning settings. The social and collaborative aspects of blended learning and the chances for peer support and feedback are frequently attributed to this satisfaction.

In the study of Chuang et al. (2018), Lightner and Lightner-Laws (2016), and Cakiroglu and Ozturk (2017) stated that students view "self-regulation" as a challenge, that they lack the self-management abilities to independently plan and manage their learning tasks, and that they devote a comparatively small amount of their time to them. In essence, they believe they lack managerial skills since they find it difficult to prioritize and arrange their tasks and homework. Studies show that in mixed learning settings, juggling several tasks might be difficult. In blended learning contexts, student engagement and achievement are significantly influenced by their enjoyment of studying alongside their peers. According to several research studies (Nordmann et al., 2018; Strayer, 2012), students express great satisfaction when collaborating with their peers in blended learning settings. The social and collaborative aspects of blended learning and the chances for peer support and feedback are frequently attributed to this satisfaction.

Studies have indicated that students participating in blended learning programs frequently experience interruptions. According to a study by Dyckhoff et al. (2018), an essential obstacle to learning in blended environments is distraction from social media and other online activities. Distractions from employment or family obligations can also make it difficult for students to concentrate and finish their assignments.

Coping Strategies

In one study, Wang et al. (2013) looked at the connection between academic success in blended learning contexts and time management abilities. The researchers discovered that students who expressed more excellent proficiency in time management also demonstrated more extraordinary accomplishments in their academic careers. According to the authors, students can gain from practicing time management techniques like goal-setting, work prioritization, and distraction avoidance. In addition to, Öztürk and Demirel (2017) looked at the variables influencing students' time management techniques in mixed learning settings in another study. The authors discovered that several variables, including self-discipline, flexibility, and course workload, highly predict students' time management strategies. The authors recommended that students create realistic goals, divide jobs into smaller portions, and use Internet tools to manage their time correctly.

According to a review of the research by Bawane and Spector (2011), students can employ several time management techniques in blended learning environments, such as making a calendar, establishing deadlines, and keeping track of their progress. The authors also recommended that students should take pauses and exercise to stay focused and energized.

Methodology

This section presents the methods. It describes and explains the different procedures, including the research design, locale and respondents, sampling design, instrumentation, validity and reliability of the instrument, data gathering procedure, and statistical tools and treatment of the data.

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive comparative research design as it describes more than two variables, which are the socio-demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age and sex, and course/program and the respondents' experiences, challenges and coping strategies during the blended learning modality, and the relationship of these variables.

Participants

This study was conducted at the College Department of Notre Dame of Midsayap College, Poblacion 5, Midsayap, Cotabato. The respondents were enrolled in first year to third-year college students for the second semester of the academic year 2022–2023. The respondents were composed of three selected courses from different department.

Instruments

The researcher employed a researcher-modified questionnaire. To address the problem statement, the researchers also used a few quotes from the literature review. The researchers created their own questionnaire for the study and gave it to the chosen respondents in person.

The instrument specifically focused on the students' learning experiences, student's challenges, students' coping strategies and significant differences in the overall learning experiences of male and female in blended learning. The measurement was rated on a scale from 1 to 5; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Procedure

Before conducting a survey, the researchers sent a letter of permission to the College of Education Dean and Adviser. After the College Dean and adviser approve the request, the researchers conducted the pilot testing. The data were sent to the statistician and after having the results, the final survey was then scheduled. The researchers then submitted a letter of request for formal survey to the deans of the different college. Upon receiving the approved letter from the dean, the survey questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Before distributing the survey questionnaires, proper guidance and clear instructions were given to the respondents. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents face-to-face. There was a 100% percentage retrieval of the questionnaires, fully accomplished by the respondents.

Statistical Tools

The responses in the questionnaire were scored, recorded and tabulated. Frequency and percentage distribution are used to determine the profile of the respondents. Mean and standard deviation were used for problem 1, 2 and 3 which are to identify the experiences, challenges encountered, and coping employed by the respondents. Problem 4 identifies the significant difference in learning experiences in the respondents when grouped according to sex, age and course t-test and ANOVA were used.

Results

The data analysis and interpretation of study findings are covered in this section. The findings addressed the study's research questions. As already indicated in the preceding section, data is interpreted in a descriptive form.

This table shows the overall result of the learning experiences of the respondents.

Table 1. *The Learning Experiences of College Students in Blended Learning*

Statements During Blended Learning	*Mean*	*SD*	*Desciption*
I always participants in teachers' discussion	4.1	0.771	Agree (A)
I am encouraged to pay attention and focus	4.04	0.777	Agree (A)
I enjoyed learning with my classmates.	4.1	0.858	Agree (A)
I actively participated in different online and onsite activities.	3.81	0.917	Agree (A)
I can clearly express my ideas and thoughts.	3.89	0.851	Agree (A)
I have developed my social skills.	3.88	0.755	Agree (A)
I enjoyed doing tasks in different learning activities.	3.94	0.826	Agree (A)
I experienced adequate opportunities to work with classmates and get peer support.	3.84	0.872	Agree (A)
I experinced adequate learning opportunities given by teachers.	3.87	0.824	Agree (A)
I interact more with my classmates and teachers.	3.83	0.842	Agree (A)
Overall	3.93	0.842	Agree (A)

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00; Strongly Agree; 3.50 – 4.49 Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 Neutral; 1.50 – 2.49 Disagree 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree

Table 1 shows the learning experiences of college students in blended learning. As shown in the table, all of the indicators have agreed by the students with an overall mean of 3.93 and overall standard deviation of 0. 842.

The highest learning experience was the statement "I am encouraged to pay attention and focus" with a mean of 4.04. It was followed by the statement "I always participated in teacher's discussion and enjoyed learning with my classmates" with a mean of 4.1. However, the lowest item was the statement "I actively participated in different online and onsite activities" with a mean of 3.81.

This table shows the overall result of the challenges encountered by the respondents.

Table 2. *Challenges Encountered by College Students in Blended Learning*

Statements During Blended Learning	*Mean*	*SD*	*Desciption*
I find it difficult to manage different tasks.	3.39	0.856	Agree (A)
I find it difficult to manage my time.	3.54	0.978	Agree (A)
I am prone to distractions while doing my task.	3.61	1.053	Agree (A)
I find it difficult to priorities my homework	3.51	1.058	Agree (A)
I have poor self-management skills to organize and manage my learning tasks independently.	3.44	1.037	Agree (A)
I find it difficult to interact and connect with my classmates.	3.42	1.084	Agree (A)
I find it difficult to perform well in class.	3.37	1.079	Agree (A)
I struggle more in class.	3.37	1.079	Agree (A)
I find it stressful due to loads of tasks.	3.57	1.017	Agree (A)
I lack reading materials.	3.46	1.029	Agree (A)
Overall	3.47	1.089	Agree (A)

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00; Strongly Agree; 3.50 – 4.49 Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 Neutral; 1.50 – 2.49 Disagree 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree

Table 2 shows the challenges encountered by college students in blended learning. As shown in the table, all of the indicators have agreed by the students with an overall mean of 3.47 and overall standard deviation of 0.029.

The highest challenge encountered by the respondents during the blended learning was that they were prone to distractions while doing task with a mean of 3.61. It was followed by stressful due to loads of task with a mean of 3.57. However, the lowest item was that they struggle more in class with a mean of 3.37. It was followed by the item which stated that they have difficulty in managing time during the blended modality with a mean of 3.39.

This table shows the overall result of the coping strategies employed by the respondents.

Table 3. *Coping Strategies Employed by Students in Blended Learning*

Statements During Blended Learning	*Mean*	*SD*	*Desciption*
I ask for assistance and guidance for teachers.	3.62	0.918	Agree (A)
I manage my time properly.	3.61	0.919	Agree (A)
I go to library to read books.	3.42	0,912	Agree (A)
I go to to a quiet place to do my task to avoid distraction.	3.86	0.943	Agree (A)
I study well.	3.86	0,804	Agree (A)
I get advice from my classmates.	3.83	0,910	Agree (A)
I take a little time to relax, breath and unwind.	4.14	0,738	Agree (A)
I take down notes and download reading materials.	3.92	0.872	Agree (A)
I ask help from peers.	3.97	0,812	Agree (A)
I trained myself to be an independent person.	4.11	0.709	Agree (A)
Overall	3.82	0.854	Agree (A)

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00; Strongly Agree; 3.50 – 4.49 Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 Neutral; 1.50 – 2.49 Disagree 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree

Table 3 shows the coping strategies employed by the college students in blended learning. As shown in the table, all of the indicators have agreed by the students with an overall mean of 3.82 and overall standard deviation of 0.854.

The highest coping strategy employed by the respondents was to take a little time to relax, breath and unwind with a mean of 4.14. The respondents also employ the coping strategies such as they are trained to be an independent person and by asking help from their peers or classmates with a mean of 4.11 and 3.87 respectively. However, the lowest item or coping strategy was going to library to read books with a mean of 3.42.

Table 4. *The Significant Difference in the Learning Experiences of College Students in Terms of Sex*

Sex	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*p-value*	*Interpretation*	*Decision*
Male	61	3.816	0.828	0.003	S	Reject the Null Hypothesis
Female	39	3.603	1.008			

Table 5. *The Significant Difference in the Learning Experiences of College Students in Terms of Sex*

Age	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*p-value*	*Interpretation*	*Decision*
18 years old	2	3.75	0.778	2.72E-14	S	Reject the Null Hypothesis
19 years old	13	3.736	0.091			
20 years old	39	3.693	0.907			
21 years old	35	3.75	0.881			
22 years old	6	3.978	0.305			
23 years old	4	4.025	0.728			
26 years old	1	2.9				

NS = Not significant at .05 level (2 – tailed)
S = Significant at .05 level (2 – tailed)

The result revealed that there is a significant difference in the learning experiences of the respondents in terms of age. This is evident in the P-value 2.72E-14 which is lesser than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant difference in the learning experiences of the respondents in terms of age are rejected.

Finding shows that the learning experiences of the college students in blended learning vary when group according to age.

Table 6. *The Significant Difference in the Learning Experiences of College Students in Terms of Course*

Course	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*p-value*	*Interpretation*	*Decision*
BEED	13	3.508	0,91	1.46E-14	S	Reject the Null Hypothesis
BPA	20	3.572	0.89			
BSA	2	3.667	0.896			
BSBA	9	3.907	0.732			
BSCPE	5	3.447	0.851			
BSCrim	20	3.76	0.86			
BSCS	4	3.692	0.954			
BSEd English	3	4.21	0.789			

BSEd Math	4	3.944	0.908
BSHM	9	4.133	0.774
BSIT	11	4.267	0.562

NS = Not significant at .05 level (2 – tailed)
S = Significant at .05 level (2 – tailed)

The result revealed that there is a significant difference in the learning experiences of the respondents in terms of course. This is evident in the P-value 1.46E-14 which is lesser than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant difference in the learning experiences of the respondents in terms of course are rejected. Finding shows that the learning experiences of the college students in blended learning vary when group according to course.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the investigation based on the problem statement of the study.

Perceived Learning Experiences of College Students in Blended Learning

The statement with the highest mean stated that "I am encouraged to pay attention and focus." described as "Agree". This implies that majority of the respondents pay attention and focus during the class discussion. This supports the study of Jaggars (2014) that students maintained their attention and focus in blended learning environment. These include distractions from the online environment, the need for self-regulation and self-discipline (Graham, 2013), and the potential for decreased social interaction and motivation (Schmid et al., 2012). In addition, the design and delivery of online materials can impact student engagement and attention (Means et al., 2010)."

This however, the lowest mean is on item 4 which states, "I actively participated in different online and onsite activities." This is in contrast with the study of Liu and Carless (2018). Active participation is defined as students' active engagement in various activities, including class discussions, group work, peer-to-peer interactions, online and onsite activities. Research has shown that active participation is associated with higher levels of student learning and engagement (Liu & Carless, 2018).

Challenges Encountered by College Students in Blended Learning

This result revealed that the respondents encountered different challenges during the blended learning. It revealed that item that has the highest result was that statement "I am prone to distractions while doing my task." According to a study by Schroeder (2018), distractions such as social media and other online activities can be a major barrier to learning in blended environments. In addition, distractions related to family or work responsibilities can also impact students' ability to focus and complete their coursework effectively. The results also showed that respondents struggled in handling varied tasks –in online and face-to-face learning. This further supports by the study, many undergraduate students encounter struggle as they navigate academic, financial, personal-emotional, and social contexts of higher education. To date, much of the research on college struggle has focused on student adjustment to college, how this adjustment is affected by antecedents and correlates, and how adjustment affects grades and retention (Credé and Niehorster, 2012). Students arrive at college with differing levels of preparedness and adaptability (Aspinwall and Taylor, 1992; Trimble, 2019); many students lack the knowledge or understanding to navigate the collegiate environment and may lack access to adequate resources, social support, and mentors (Horn and Nunez, 2000; Hickman and Andrews, 2003; Schneider and Ward, 2003; Mehta et al., 2011).

Coping Strategies Employed by Students in Blended Learning

The results of the data showed that the respondents employ various coping strategies to cope with their challenges during the blended learning. The study revealed that respondents take a little time to relax, breath, and unwind. This implies that the majority of students agreed that they have been taking time to relax, breath and unwind when they experience. A study had focused on the benefits of taking breaks and engaging in physical activity to reduce stress in online learning environments. For example, Kim and colleagues (2020) found that taking breaks during online learning sessions improved students' attention and performance, while a study by Sutarto and colleagues (2021) showed that physical activity can help reduce stress and improve cognitive functioning in online learners.

However, the lowest mean which states, "I go to library to read books. This implies that the majority of students are agree when it comes to going to library to read books. The study by Dickey and Spector (2008) investigated the role of the physical library in blended learning environments. The authors found that while students could access many resources online, they still valued the physical library as a place to access physical books, study with peers, and receive assistance from librarians. The authors suggested that the library plays an important role in supporting students' academic success in blended learning environments.

The Significant Difference in the Learning Experiences of College Students in Terms of Sex, Age, and Course

The result revealed that there is a significant difference in the learning experiences of the respondents in terms of sex. Finding shows that the learning experiences of the college students in blended learning vary when group according to sex.

The result also showed that there is a significant difference in the learning experiences of the respondents in terms of age. This indicate that the learning experiences of the college students in blended learning vary when group according to age.

The result revealed that there is a significant difference in the learning experiences of the respondents in terms of course. Finding shows that the learning experiences of the college students in blended learning vary when group according to course.

Conclusion

The findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:The analysis of various studies on the learning experiences of college students in blended learning suggests that this approach to teaching and learning can be highly effective when implemented properly. With the flexibility and convenience of online learning combined with the advantages of in-person instruction, blended learning offers students a more engaging and customized learning environment. This method enables a range of teaching techniques and learning exercises that may be modified to accommodate students' different needs and learning preferences. However, successful implementation of blended learning requires careful planning and support from instructors and institutions. Students must be adequately prepared and motivated for the demands of self-regulated learning, and technology may be used effectively and seamlessly into the learning process. Institutions must also provide adequate resources, such as technical support and professional development opportunities for instructors. Future studies need to be conducted to properly comprehend how blended learning affects student learning outcomes and pinpoint best practices for efficient implementation. However, the data from recent studies indicates that blended learning may become a more significant component of the college curriculum and potentially improve the efficacy and quality of higher education.

Based on the analysis of various studies on the learning experiences of college students in blended learning, it is recommended that instructors and institutions consider the following strategies to enhance the effectiveness of this approach: (1) To further gather more data about the students' learning experiences, a qualitative study may be utilized. (2) For teachers and schools, properly instruct students on how to use the learning management system and any other pertinent software or platforms, as well as the online course components, should be done in a straightforward and comprehensive manner by professors and educational institutions. To increase participation and foster a feeling of community, provide plenty of chances for online and in-person student cooperation and interaction. (3) Provide frequent feedback and assessment opportunities to help students monitor their progress and adjust their learning strategies as needed. (4) Provide sufficient academic advising, tutoring, and time management techniques to students struggling with the self-regulated learning required in a blended learning setting. (5) Evaluate the effectiveness of the blended learning approach regularly and make necessary adjustments to ensure that it meets the needs and preferences of students.

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