



## THRIVING AMIDST CHANGE: BEEd STUDENT'S COPING STRATEGIES AND INSIGHTS IN THE MODULAR DISTANCE LEARNING MODALITY

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** When Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic was declared, West Visayas State University-Himamaylan City Campus opted to adopt flexible learning to continue the learning of tertiary education students at home by using Modular Distance Learning to accommodate students living in far-flung areas without internet access. This study aimed to discover the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) students' coping strategies and insights into using modular distance learning modality.

**Theoretical framework:** This qualitative study is anchored on constructionism. The fundamental assumption of constructionism that reality is constructed which means reality is not an ontologically objective, given reality. Human invents models, concepts, and schemes to better understand or make sense with the experience and continually test and modify these constructed reality with the new experience. Humans do not construct interpretation separately, but with careful consideration of the shared practices and understanding.

**Methodology:** Data were gathered using the qualitative phenomenological approach by conducting two semi-structured interviews with ten (10) Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) university students. Participants were selected using the purposive sampling method, specifically the criterion sampling method. Thematic Analysis was done using NVIVO to analyze the data collected.

**Results and discussion:** It was discovered that students built various coping strategies like motivating themselves to survive, taking a break after stressful days, praying to conquer difficulties, trusting God's plan, setting up schedules to manage time effectively, and collaborating with friends and classmates to understand the complex lesson better. Appreciating the value and elements of traditional learning and realizing that everything they do is for the love is self, dreams, and family are two important insights for the students.

**Conclusion:** Teachers may foster an environment that promotes self-motivation among students. Students may recognize their strengths, set goals, find intrinsic motivation, and develop a positive mindset to succeed academically. The school may organize activities to further enhance the spirit of collaboration, perseverance, and resilience among students.

**Keywords:** Coping Strategies, Insights, Modular Distance Learning, COVID-19, New Normal, Qualitative-Phenomenological.

## PROSPERANDO EM MEIO À MUDANÇA: ESTRATÉGIAS DE ENFRENTAMENTO E CONHECIMENTOS DOS ALUNOS DO BEEd NA MODALIDADE DE ENSINO A DISTÂNCIA MODULAR

### RESUMO

**Introdução:** Quando a pandemia da Doença por Coronavírus (Covid-19) foi declarada, o Campus da Universidade Estadual de West Visayas em Himamaylan City optou por adotar um aprendizado flexível para continuar a aprendizagem de estudantes do ensino superior em casa, usando o Modular Distance Learning (Aprendizagem a

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Distância Modular) para acomodar estudantes que vivem em áreas distantes sem acesso à Internet. Este estudo teve como objetivo descobrir as estratégias e os insights dos estudantes de Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEed) sobre o uso da modalidade modular de ensino à distância.

**Estrutura teórica:** Este estudo qualitativo é ancorado no construcionismo. A suposição fundamental do construcionismo de que a realidade é construída, o que significa que a realidade não é um ontologicamente objetivo, dada a realidade. Os humanos inventam modelos, conceitos e esquemas para entender melhor ou fazer sentido com a experiência e continuamente testar e modificar essa realidade construída com a nova experiência. Os seres humanos não constroem a interpretação separadamente, mas com consideração cuidadosa das práticas e da compreensão compartilhadas.

**Metodologia:** Os dados foram coletados usando a abordagem fenomenológica qualitativa, realizando duas entrevistas semiestruturadas com dez (10) estudantes universitários de Bacharelado em Educação Elementar (BEEed). Os participantes foram selecionados utilizando o método de amostragem intencional, especificamente o método de amostragem por critério. A Análise Temática foi realizada utilizando o NVIVO para analisar os dados coletados.

**Resultados e discussão:** Descobriu-se que os alunos construíram várias estratégias de enfrentamento, como motivar-se a sobreviver, fazer uma pausa após dias estressantes, rezar para vencer as dificuldades, confiar no plano de Deus, estabelecer horários para gerir o tempo de forma eficaz e colaborar com amigos e colegas de classe para entender melhor a lição complexa. Apreciar o valor e os elementos da aprendizagem tradicional e perceber que tudo o que eles fazem é para o amor é eu, sonhos e família são duas percepções importantes para os alunos.

**Conclusão:** Os professores podem promover um ambiente que promova a automotivação entre os alunos. Os alunos podem reconhecer seus pontos fortes, estabelecer metas, encontrar motivação intrínseca, e desenvolver uma mentalidade positiva para ter sucesso acadêmico. A escola pode organizar atividades para melhorar ainda mais o espírito de colaboração, perseverança e resiliência entre os alunos.

**Palavras-chave:** Estratégias de Enfrentamento, Percepções, Aprendizagem a Distância Modular, COVID-19, Novo Normal, Qualitativo-Fenomenológico.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The education sector worldwide took severe blows from the COVID-19 pandemic. During these unprecedented times, the prolonged closure of schools in several countries became necessary for ensuring public health safety. Remote learning then emerged as the only viable solution nationwide. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has brought about a sudden change to various learning platforms, such as online learning, modular learning, and blended learning, which has presented several obstacles for students, such as maintaining their motivation, managing their time effectively, accessing the necessary resources, poor internet service, anxiety, distraction from household chores and low retention (Balolong, 2022; Muhria et al., 2023)

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), more than 188 countries worldwide, covering 91% of enrolled learners, closed their schools and affected in order to prevent the spreading of the virus. (“The Impact of COVID-19 on Student Equity and Inclusion: Supporting Vulnerable Students During School Closures and School Re-openings,” 2020b). In the face of COVID-19's widespread impact on global health systems and economies worldwide, education in the Philippines also underwent significant changes. After being shuttered for well over a year for public safety reasons, schools resumed operations, and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) adopted the flexible learning



scheme combining both virtual approaches and modular learning to provide educational continuity for students. This system allows them access from remote locations while adhering to social distancing protocols.

Nevertheless, despite its advantages over traditional teaching setups alone, this approach also presents unique difficulties (Basar et al., 2021). The education system in Himamaylan faces a predicament as students enrolled at university are compelled to dwell in isolated areas. These students cannot establish a connection with the internet due to its unavailability. The university adopted modular distance learning (MDL) to provide students with exceptional education and versatile learning modules. The aim is to tailor courses to meet individual requirements.

The researchers recognized elementary students' resilience and determination in navigating through testing times of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study embarked on the task of understanding the ability to cope of elementary education students through an exploration of their strategies and insights. In shedding light on the opportunities related to shifting instruction methods to embrace the new normal, this study aimed to provide significant findings. The research extends the current understanding of Modular Distance Learning by illuminating how elementary education students adapted to this learning mode. Moreover, the result of the study furnished proposals for enhancing the Modular Distance Learning infrastructure to bolster successful student outcomes.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This study utilized a qualitative-phenomenological approach to explore coping strategies and insights in the context of modular distance learning during the pandemic. The qualitative approach aimed to thoroughly examine, understand, and describe the phenomenon under investigation. By adopting a phenomenological design, the researchers aimed to set aside biases and preconceived assumptions about how individuals perceive, experience, and react to a specific situation (Giorgi, 2012). Through the qualitative research process, the researchers analyzed the situation inductively, recursively, and interactively, comprehensively depicting the participant's experiences in the most appropriate and contextually relevant terms (Creswell, 2017).

### **2.2 Participants of the Study**

The study included ten (10) participants who were Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) students enrolled at the university during the academic year 2021-2022. The criterion sampling method was employed, selecting participants based on specific research criteria. The following criteria were used: 1. Participants who utilized modular distance learning in printed or digital formats; 2. Participants who remained officially enrolled since the First Semester of the academic year 2021-2022 did not drop out of the university; 3. Participants reside in remote areas more than 5 kilometers from the town or city center; 4. Participants self-reported experiencing difficulties in modular distance learning, such as distance-related challenges, lack of communication devices, signal issues, or part-time jobs. The participants' teacher-advisers determined these difficulties. Based on the recommendation of Creswell W. & Creswell D. (2023), the phenomenological study involved conducting in-depth interviews with three (3) to ten (10) participants. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure participant confidentiality and protect their identities.



### **2.3 Research Instrument**

For this study, the researchers created an interview guide to gather comprehensive insights into the experiences of BEEd students using a modular distance learning approach. The researchers had prepared open-ended questions, but they also asked follow-up questions to capture rich participant data. An interview protocol was employed to ensure a sense of openness and trust among the participants. To enhance the validity of the open-ended questions, the researchers sought advice from experts in qualitative research to assess their face and content validity. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2008), interviews play a vital role in validating the accuracy of the data researchers collect. Interviews can take various forms, such as structured interviews with prepared questions, utilizing an interview guide or protocol, or even spontaneous and unplanned interactions.

### **2.4 Data Gathering Procedure**

Before commencing the study, the researchers diligently adhered to all the requirements and obtained formal approval from the university's research committee. Subsequently, a formal request letter seeking permission to conduct the study was meticulously prepared and submitted to the Campus Administrator of the university. To strengthen the trust and credibility of the research endeavor, the approved letter from the Campus Administrator was appended to individual letters sent to each participant.

The researchers conducted two semi-structured interviews for each participant, each spanning approximately 45 minutes. The first interview occurred at the participants' residences, prioritizing their comfort and allowing the researchers to gain firsthand insight into their unique situations. The researchers personally traveled to the participants' locations, considering their availability and ensuring the interviews were conducted at mutually convenient times. The second semi-structured interview was conducted at the school, with the participants' availability for the interview carefully considered to provide sufficient time to share extensive information.

After data gathering, valuable insights and a deeper understanding were derived from thoughtful discussions. The interview questions posed to the participants were based on a meticulously designed key informant interview flow. The researchers conducted the interviews, ensuring the participants' perspectives and experiences were effectively captured. The researchers asked focused questions during the interviews to elicit valuable insights without leading the participants' responses.

The researchers emphasized the confidentiality of the information collected throughout the study. Notes, recordings, and documentation were handled with the utmost care, ensuring the participants' privacy was rigorously protected. Moreover, as part of the research paper, no identifying information about the participants was disclosed, safeguarding their anonymity and privacy.

### **2.5 Trustworthiness of the Data**

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the researchers employed investigator triangulation as a validation technique. This approach involves using multiple researchers to examine the data from different perspectives, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings. By incorporating investigator triangulation, the researchers aimed to minimize potential biases during data collection, reporting, or analysis (Carter et al., 2014).

While gathering participant data, the researchers utilized an interview protocol that provided structure and direction during each conversation. Furthermore, the researchers leveraged media such as video, pictures, and audio recordings to better capture responses.



Before beginning any discussions, the researchers sought explicit consent from all participating individuals. It was clearly understood that while any collected media would not be published in any way, it was essential to verify recorded interviews against participant responses in transcription efforts combined with investigator triangulation methodologies to improve accuracy across observed themes. This approach allowed for a more comprehensive examination of the research phenomenon and provided a solid foundation for subsequent analysis and interpretation.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, the researchers employed a method called member checking. Member checking involved seeking participant feedback to determine if the data analysis aligned with their own experiences (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). According to Creswell (2023), member checking was most effective when applied to refined interpretations, such as emerging themes and patterns, rather than the actual transcripts.

In this study, the researchers thoroughly examined the procedures for trustworthiness, including member checking, from three perspectives: the researcher's viewpoint, the participants' viewpoint, and the external readers' perspective of the final research report (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Member checking was conducted after the themes had been developed. The researchers arranged another meeting with the participants, during which they asked the participants to review the identified themes and confirm if they accurately represented their intended meaning in their responses.

After the member-checking process, the researcher diligently documented any revisions based on the participants' feedback and incorporated them into the final themes. This iterative process of incorporating participants' perspectives enhanced the validity and reliability of the study findings, as it ensured that the interpretations aligned with the participants' lived experiences.

## **2.6 Ethical Consideration**

The approach in conducting this study was anchored on an unwavering commitment to prioritizing ethical principles so as not to compromise on participants' welfare, respect, or confidentiality. Before collecting data or engaging with prospective participants directly from the University where they were based, the researchers needed to obtain express permission through an official communication addressed formally by a letter sent expressly requesting from the Campus Administrator. This official communication contained key assurances regarding maintaining proper security measures for handling data collected during research activities while providing needed information effectively through multiple mediums like voice calls and instant messaging.

The researcher took the time to thoroughly explain the research process, the purpose of the study, and how the data collected would be used in developing a curriculum enhancement plan. A consent letter was sent to involve the participants voluntarily, explicitly seeking their permission to participate in the study. Additionally, the approved letter of conduct from the Campus Administrator was included, further reinforcing the trustworthiness and credibility of the study.

A crucial consideration throughout this research project was paying close attention to maintaining participant privacy. All individuals involved received assurances from the outset regarding complete data security utilizing strict measures for keeping information anonymous and strictly confidential by not sharing any personally identifiable details or third-party access whatsoever. Ensuring sufficient provisions helped fortify mutual understanding between researchers and participants based on respect towards individual rights to discretion during this initiative for valuable findings without infringing on anyone's privacy rights freely given by them.





## 2.7 Data Analysis Procedure

The coping strategies and insights of the BEEEd students were carefully analyzed using Colaizzi's method, a valuable approach for interpreting qualitative research data and extracting meaningful information. This method facilitated the researchers' exploration of the collected data from in-depth interviews and teachers' journals. To conduct the analysis, the researchers followed a series of steps outlined by Colaizzi.

First, the researchers immersed themselves in the descriptions provided by the participating students, gaining a deep understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives. This initial immersion allowed the researchers to familiarize themselves with the richness of the data.

Next, the researchers identified statements within the data that were significant to the study. These statements were carefully selected for further analysis, as they contained valuable insights and reflections shared by the participants.

In the third step, the researchers meticulously scrutinized the selected statements to extract underlying meanings and themes. The researchers uncovered common patterns and recurring ideas by critically examining the statements, which were then grouped together to form themes.

Through a rigorous process of categorization and organization, the researchers created a coherent framework of themes that represented the coping strategies and insights of the BEEEd students. Similar categories were grouped, allowing a comprehensive understanding of the student's experiences.

The researchers integrated the identified themes and categories into a comprehensive topic description in the fourth step. This synthesis provided a holistic representation of the coping strategies and insights observed among the students.

Finally, to ensure the accuracy and verification of the results, the participants were allowed to review and sign a copy of the findings. This member-checking process allowed the participants to confirm the accuracy of the data about their triumphs, success stories, and insights as multigrade teachers, further strengthening the credibility and validity of the research outcomes.

## 3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Coping Mechanisms of the Students to Overcome Challenges in the Modular Distance Learning Modality

Modular distance learning modality is still the best option for students with no internet connectivity, even though they encounter many challenges they had not previously anticipated. It was revealed in this study that students have difficulties in understanding their learning modules, connecting to the internet, managing their time effectively, retrieving and submitting their learning modules, learning at home, and lacking the technology to support distance education. These experiences led students to build coping mechanisms to overcome these challenges since they cannot change the education system. However, they can change their mindset and attitude toward the situation.

#### 3.1.1 Theme 1: keeping head high: motivating oneself to survive

More than 300 million students worldwide whose education was disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic (Staff, 2020). Undergoing this period of rapid change is challenging for students and emotionally draining. Learning in this pandemic causes an extra layer of panic in



the situation, which is already stressful. In the study of PRASAD et al. (2022), results revealed that stress has a significant effect on the students performance and psychological well being. However, with the future seeming to conceal and no classroom environment that inspires students to grow, students' motivation to learn is dwindling.

### 3.1.1.1 Subtheme 1: May Handom ko nga Dapat Malab-ot: Imbue Everything with the Sense of Why

Modular distance learning brings knowledge provided in the modules and stress; that is why students need to imbue everything with the sense of why. In her case, Angela answered this by focusing on her goals for herself and her family. She even said,

*"Nagtatak na sa ulo ko nga (.) bisan ano pa ka-stress nga maagyan ko(0.7) ma::: overcome ko man lang (.) na basta panumdumon ko lang gid nga (.) may dreams ko nga gina-ano, may mga pangarap ko nga dapat nga maabot(.) May mga::: may pangarap ko sa mga::: sa mga family ko::: nga (.) nga gusto ko i-fulfill" (It coined in mind that no matter what stress I would undergo I could overcome it. I should remember that I have dreams and ambitions that I would like to achieve for my family)*

Lesley also responded to this sense of why to maintain her motivation towards learning by redirecting to her family and a brighter future. She uttered,

*"First, Sir, ano, gin paminsar ko ang future (.) kag ang pangabudlay nila Mama kag Papa. Tapos gapaminsar ko nga indi man lang ako isa gaantos Sir damo man kami bi Sir. "(First, I am thinking about my future and the sacrifices of my parents. I also think I am not the only one who is suffering; there is a lot of us.)*

When asked what kind of future she might have, she thinks of landing an excellent job to help her parents. Her family puts her at the center of why she was trying to fight all of the challenges she experienced. She expressed that,

*"Someday makabulig ko sa ila ni Mama kag ni Papa kag makapangita sang nami nga obra." (Someday, I could help my parents, and I could find a good job.)*

A study by Wai-yee (2013) shows that motivation and determination were one of the coping strategies of female students to succeed academically. On the other hand, this study shows that not only female participants are using this coping strategy to overcome the challenges of modular distance learning, as Balmond shows this by character by pushing despite the difficult situation. As he believes in the power of dreams, he also keeps this as his reason to move forward. He said,

*"Ang sa utok ko na lang maka-maestro ko ya (.) makabulig gid ko ya sa ginikanan ko. Amo na bisan budlayan ko:::padayun ko dyapon." (On my mind, I could be a teacher and help my parents. That's why though it is hard, I keep pushing on.)*

Students' determination to do something and their increased assurance in their abilities emerged despite the pandemic. They have demonstrated initiative and confidence



in their own abilities, or self-efficacy. It has been shown that students with high levels of self-efficacy in remote learning are more likely to persist in the face of adversity (Omotoy, 2023)

### 3.1.1.2 Subtheme 2: Tanan Nga Gakatabo, May Purpose: Building Self-Regulating Strategies

Kwaa et al. (2017) stressed that convincing and conditioning one's mind by being positive always helps students fight the challenges of distance learning. Building self-regulating strategies in a time of too much stress and stress could make the learning experience much more manageable. These statements were proved accurate based on the statements of Esmeralda, who remains positive for herself and persistent as she pursues her studies.

*"I-anhon ko bala danay ang akon nga kaugalingon nga mangin stable akon nga:: paginstindi or pag-ano sa akon nga sige nga pagpangabuhi kag sa akon nga as a student bala Sir aw nga amo na nga dapat indi gid pagpabay-an ang pag-eskwela." (I am helping myself to become stable by understanding or persisting as a student. I should not neglect my studies)*

In her case, Selena remains motivated by self-regulation that everything happens for a reason; luckily, many people were motivating her to keep going. She mentioned that,

*"Damo man Sir ga-motivate sa amon Sir Nga:: nga tanan-tanan Sir nga nag><tanan-tana Sir nga nagakatabo may purpose." (Many people motivate us, and everything motivates me. I believe that what happens serves a purpose."*

Roger admitted that he sometimes felt lazy in answering her modules, yet he built self-regulation strategies to keep his motivation to learn alive. He expressed that,

*"so ang ginahimo kung ano ang:: instruction sa eskwelahan, kung ano ang mga:: ginahatag sang teacher nga mga activities (.) mga kinahanglan namon ipasa mga requirements ga-ginahimo ko na lang. Ginatingwaan ko na lang nga mahimo." (I did was whatever the instruction from the school, what are the tasks or activities given by the teacher, the things we need to submit I am just doing it. I am doing my best to do it."*

The spirit of motivation by conditioning oneself to keep going despite all the adversities in modular distance learning modality can also be reflected based on the statement of Kadita as she declared that,

*"nakahambal ko sa kaugalingon ko nga nang:: padayunon ko na lang bala sini Sir haw kay challenge man ni sa amon nga students ang module." (I told myself that I have to keep pushing on because these modules are challenges for us students.)*

Cahapay et al. (2020) recognized why some students succeeded in distance learning. These are persistence, ability, and capacity, avoiding distractions, and being passionate about one's goal. One of these recipes was done by Rafaela. As she lived in a remote area without electricity, she had to go to the town proper to get some signal and charge her phone to check updates. Despite the disheartening situation, she kept going because she was determined to finish her education. She affirmed that,





*"Kwan lang gid determination (smiles) determination nga matapos(.) kag amo na eh, kinahanglan mag magkadto gid di para lang maka-ano para lang maka-ano (.)maka-charge kag makapa:::signal man(0.7)" (Just a determination that I could graduate. I have to go here to charge and get some signal)*

Beatrix also applied one of the motivation recipes, which was persistence. In her case, she kept going despite facing many hardships in her studies. With all the pressing problems, she faced them with a strong sense of motivation.

*"Kung nabudlayan na ko (.).gina-motivate ko lang self ko nga::: kayanon, nga atubangon kay::: kay kung pabay-an mo lang man na ara lang man na (.). ang problema, lain gid ya kung atubangon mo gid nga atubangon mo gid kag malampuwasan" (When I am having a hard time, I keep motivating myself. I have to face it because if I am going to ignore it problems will remain, unlike if I am going to face it, I would survive.)"*

Additionally, when she feels lazy sometimes, she reminds herself of her responsibility as the eldest sibling of the family and to work hard. She said,

*Gahambal lang ko ya sa self ko nga indi magtinamaraan (.). kay amo ni (.).nang magulang ka kinahanglan mo, tapuson, kinahanglan mo gid mag (.). mag-obra kag mag::: mapisanon para lang::: para makatapos kag malampuwasan ang tanan ni." (I am just telling myself that I should not be lazy because you are the eldest and you need to finish your education. I need to work hard and::: be diligent to::: to graduate and overcome all of these challenges.)"*

Participants of the study have shown high levels of flexibility and emotional intelligence that have allowed them to form positive relationships with others, do well in school, and accomplish their objectives (Calle-Ramirez et al, 2023).. Even as their surroundings shifted and new threats emerged, they learned to prioritize what was most important to them and develop habits that helped them pay closer attention in social situations.

### 3.1.1.2 Subtheme 3: Laban Lang: Trusting Oneself and Self-Confidence

Cirino (2018) mentioned that trusting oneself can build one's confidence, making it easier to make decisions. With that, Lylia understands that she can trust herself in the things she can do to make a difference. Trusting oneself and self-confidence are great motivations that an individual can use to succeed. When asked how she copes with all the challenges she has been through, she cheerfully answered,

*"Tiwala sa sarili" (Self-confidence)*

She applied the reality that "There is no one more important to trust than yourself." she added,

*Kakayanin! (h) Laban lang! (I can do it! Keep fighting!)"*

Additionally, she used another weapon to cope with the difficulty of modular distance, which is happiness.



*"Maging happy ka na lang amidst the pandemic (h) kay wala ka naman may mahimo (head shakes) kaysa mangasubo ka da kag (.) magmukmok ka da sa kilid" (Be happy amidst the pandemic because there is nothing you can do; instead of being sad and sulking on the side.)*

This is also the case for Balmond, who mentioned that he has no choice but to live with it and be happy. In his words,

*"Wala naman kami ni mahimo (.) budlay kung sa tood lang (.) pero may mayo man sa nga nadulot sa amon::: kundi sadyahon mo na lang" (We can't do something about this it is hard, really, but it caused us good things too, so be happy instead)*

All participants were coping by motivating themselves to overcome challenges they have experienced using the modular distance learning modality. They were inspired by why they should keep fighting, building self-regulating strategies to maintain enthusiasm for learning, establishing self-confidence, and trusting themselves to survive. When faced with obstacles to their education, they learn to think outside the box to find solutions. Intrinsic motivation was identified as one of the key determinants in creative output (Son and Nguyen, 2023).

Gustiani (2020) declared that motivation helped students maintain participation in distance learning. Similarly, all participants were coping by motivating themselves to overcome challenges they have experienced using the modular distance learning modality. They were inspired by why they should keep fighting, building self-regulating strategies to maintain enthusiasm for learning, establishing self-confidence, and trusting themselves to survive.

### 3.1.2 Theme 2: soothing one`s nerve: taking a break after stressful days

Students claimed that to overcome the pressure of distance learning; one coping mechanism is relaxing or doing nothing, thinking about the positivity of the future, and doing something that will make them happy.

Modular distance learning modality benefits students considering its flexibility and safety against COVID-19. Walinga (2014) noted that physical stress management techniques are physical exercise and relaxation. Moreover, the amygdala can change due to meditation and breathing exercises (Yuliana, 2021). In this study, participants noted that one coping mechanism they have used is relaxing or doing nothing, thinking about the positivity of the future, and doing something that will make oneself happy.

#### 3.1.2.1 Subtheme 1: Para sa Akon Kaugalingon: Finding Time to Pause and Relax

Students stressed the importance of “me time” by caring for their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs. It is very beneficial as it makes them come out stronger from unexpected challenges. Angela used this coping strategy by finding time to relax, take care of herself, and have “me time” amid the challenges she encounters in modular distance learning. She stated that,

*"I find time to relax (.) Ahhm::: (.) ginahatagan ko akon kaugalingon nga ma::: ara balang::: arang (.) may ara man time" (I find time to relax. I am giving myself a time)*



Also, she was doing something that did not involve the modules to keep herself healthy before anything got worst.

*“ngita ka time nga::: nga::: maghimo bala sang wala labot ang module (.) kay para lang gid nga indi maapektuhan ang kaugalingon mo gid bala mala-la gid ang ano.”* (I find some time to do things excluding the module so that what I am feeling would not get worse.)

Doing something out of modules was also what Lylia exhibited. In her particular case, she tried to relax by doing her hobby, writing a poem about her feelings.

*“Hobby, writing. Ginasulat mo imo nga emotion, himoon mo siya nga poem kung ano nabatyagan mo”* (Hobby, writing. I am writing my emotion, by making a poem about what I feel.)

When questioned how she feels when doing it, she replied that it calms her from all the stress that has torn her and makes her feel better to work again with her modules.

*“Maumpawan ka na dayon. Waay na, okay na, gora naman sa olobrahon mo (h).”* (It makes me calm immediately. It's all gone, everything was okay, and I am back to my work right away.)

The human body needs rest and breaks occasionally (Essel & Owusu, 2017). Especially when students learn in an environment for an extended period, their cognitive function is heavily affected. They become lazy and try to pursue their studies, and this feeling stresses them since they do not have the energy and motivation to continue with the teaching-learning process.

### 3.1.2.2 Subtheme 2: Kis-a Galagaw na Lang: Diverting one`s Attention to Meaningful Activities

De Guzman et al. (2020) acknowledge that distance learning is very stressful for students, so they divert their attention to what is more valuable. They spend time with their family and do things that make them happy, like planting, watering the plants, playing with their younger siblings, dogs, or cats, or even watching movies to ease their feeling of burden and discomfort in remote learning.

Similarly, Kadita tried to escape the stress of a modular distance learning modality by doing something entertaining, like watching movies and chatting with her friends; after the simple, energizing actions, she was ready again to face the modules. She uttered,

*“Galantaw ko Sir mga movies, gakatdo ko sa mga friends ko man nga lapit sa akon kag mag (.) ano lang storya-storya daw ano man bala Sir aw><Pagkatapos sina nga daw okay naman siya gabalik naman ko obra module nga daw ka 11ay a11.”* (I am watching movies, go to my friends who are just nearby just talking to them. After that, I feel much better and I am going back to accomplish my modules)

Beatrix's way of easing herself from all the difficulties of modules she has been through was similar to Kadita's, as her friends also accompanied her. However, they were wandering somewhere to escape and refresh, in her case. She narrated that,



*“Kis-a galagaw na lang><Gapanghagad lagaw kung diri ka lang sa balay makit-an mo gid ang stress kung paminsaron mo lang tanan bala nga olobrahon di ma-stress ka gid pero once nga makalagaw><makalagaw-lagaw ka upod sa imo nga friends daw syempre gatawhay man imo nga paminsaron nga daw that way lang nga biskan isa lang ka adlaw bala at least kay maka refresh imo nga mind nga (.) nga wala ka sang paminsaron”* (Sometimes, I am wandering around. I'm inviting my friends to roam around because if I am going to stay at home you would see all the stress and I if you are going to think all of those work to be done you would be stressed but once you wander around with your friends, of course, your mind get cleared in that way even though it's just a day at least you have refreshed your mind as you have nothing to think about.)

Also, Lylia was wandering around with her family and people close to her in the mountains to relax her mind from all the problems and obstacles she had experienced. She stated that,

*“Ma-refresh man utok mo Sir (.) magka-refresh man utok mo. Lagaw ka sa mga bukid, upod imo family kag mga friends, mga katiyaan mo, mga kapitbahay.”* (It's refreshing to the mind when you wander to the mountains with your family, friends, relatives, and neighbors.)

Hadler (2021) suggested that to overcome the stress, feeling of isolation, and difficulties in remote learning, students should take a break by staying away from the news and their coursework and doing something they would love to do or something they would surely enjoy. With these activities, they could relax and find themselves rejuvenating from the depressing situation of the world.

Similarly, Rafaela was relaxing from the modular distance learning modality by staying away from everything that would bother her and doing something that entertained her. In her statements,

*“Kung kis-a ga:::ano ga unwind (h) pahangin-hangin kag (.) kung kis-a (.) waay lang danay ginapanumdom (.) ang mga problema, obra-obra lang danay para malingaw.* (Sometimes I unwind, relax, and sometimes I am not thinking the problems; I am working with something that entertains me.)

When asked about the activities that entertain her, she responded that,

*“Bantay-bantay tiangge, tiktok (h)”* (Attending the sari-sari store, doing some TikTok videos)

Aside from attending their sari-sari store and doing TikTok videos, Rafaela also avoids the pressure of modular distance learning modality by enjoying her family's company.

*“Magtaklad to syempre upod ko akon ano family daw ma-enjoy ka man bala aw.”* (When I got home, of course I am with my family and I am enjoying it.)

### 3.1.2.2 Subtheme 3: Indi Gid Madula ang Kaon: Overcoming Stress by Comfort Eating

Gore et al. (2014) concluded in their study that distant students use various coping strategies to cope with distance learning in which. One was comfort eating, a form of escapism



that students use to ignore stressful experiences. This result coincides with this study as Balmond tries to fight the stressful effect of distance learning by eating.

*“Makabaton ko kis-a bayad sa gina-obrahan ko, gabakal ko dayon pagkaon ah (.) baklan ko man sa balay kag gakaon gid ko sang mga gusto ko man parehos sang tinapay::: daw wala lang problema makakaon ko ya.”* (When I received my payment from my job, I buy it with some food immediately. I bought some food in the house and I am eating everything that I want to eat like bread and it seems like I don't have any problems when I eat .)

However, Selena was relaxing and rejuvenating herself by eating; on the other hand, Ljubičić et al. (2023) concluded that emotional situations, including stress, depression, loneliness, the urge to stay awake, relaxation, and self-improvement, can all lead to food consumption and emotional eating behavior. Their findings suggest that those with higher levels of emotional motivation and eating behavior conditioning are more likely to overeat when stressed, depressed, lonely, or bored. Selena expressed that,

*“Kaon. (h) Kaon (h). Una-una gid Sir kaon. (h) Indi gid na madula Sir ya.”* (I am eating. The first thing that I do is eating, that thing will never go away.)

When asked how eating helps her cope with the difficulties of modular distance learning modality, she explains that it boosts her mind. She uttered,

*“daw ga-boost akon (.) nga panghuna-huna. Daw (.) makapaminsar naman ko liwat Sir.”* (It boosts my mind and it seems like I could think better again.

The study by Calo et al. (2021) revealed that one of the coping mechanisms of students in distance learning is taking breaks wherein they are doing enjoyable activities to energize their minds and avoid boredom. These activities include sleeping, spending time on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), making Tiktok videos, resting, watching movies, taking short walks, and playing. These activities are important since they positively affect the students as they enjoy and revive their well-being. Similarly, in this study, it can be drawn that seven of the ten participants practice the exact coping mechanism to overcome the challenges of modular distance learning. They practice various relaxation methods, such as watching movies, talking with friends, wandering around with friends and family, staying away from problems, eating, entertaining themselves, and doing nothing.

### 3.1.3 Theme 3: hope against hope: praying to conquer difficulties

With the modular distance learning modality, students face many challenges that can be exciting while others might not be wanted. In any case, students are doubting and feel unmotivated if they could ever rise against the challenges. In order to succeed against all the challenges that the new normal education could offer, studies found that one of the coping strategies that students applied was praying.

#### 3.1.3.1 Subtheme 1: Prayer is the Best Medicine: Trusting God's Plan

Based on the study of Cahapay et al. (2020), students resort to praying to cope with the demands of remote learning. They were praying to God that everything would be fine. This coping mechanism can be based on the responses of Selena as she believes in the power of





prayer and trusting the plans of God in his life since her education and motivation were affected when their house was burned down. She said,

*"Kay ang prayer is the best medicine Sir mo. () Pray lang tapos, nang, trust in God's plans." (Because prayer is the best medicine. Just pray and trust in God's plans."*

Consequently, Roger believes that everything happens for a reason. That is why he laid everything to God and keeps doing that may help him succeed. He said

*"Gapati man ko nga tanan nga gakatabo may rason amo nga::: salig lang ko sa Ginoo kag gapangamuyo lang sa iya adlaw-adlaw ()mga malapuwasan ko lang gid ni ya." (I believe that everything happens for a reason that is why I trust God and just pray every day that I can overcome this.)*

Kadita, on the other hand, recognized prayer as her way to communicate, especially in those difficult moments she experienced. In her words,

*"At least sa dira bala Sir sa mga prayer mo daw ma::: dira mo mahambal tanan bala Sir haw, mga Ano mo sa prayer mo(.) Amo na kis-a dira na lang ko gahatag sang time kis-a kung budlay na gid ga-pray na lang gid." (At least in your prayers, Sir you can express everything; that is why sometimes I give time to pray whenever it feel so hard)*

### 3.1.3.1 Subtheme 2: Gapangamuyo nga Buligan ko Sang Gino-o: Praying for Strength and Motivation

Since remote learning is demanding for most students, Kwaa et al. (2017) stated that students were praying that they could accomplish their tasks effectively and that teachers would understand their situation if they could not submit their requirements on time. In this study, Esmeralda prays to cope when she feels unmotivated and cannot answer her modules. She explained that,

*"hambal ko sa Ginoo nga buligan ya gid ko Sir ya nga biskan wala na ko gana Sir kag kung wala na ko may i-answer Sir nga kabay gid Sir siya gid Ginoo ang magprovide sang tanan ko nga ano nga kinahanglanon kung ano pa ang maisabat ko sa akon module." (I'm telling God to help me especially when I'm starting to lose my motivation and I do not have anything to answer, and He would provide me with everything I need to accomplish my modules.)*

Lesley's actions were similar to Esmeralda's as she also prays to accomplish her tasks and succeeds in the modular distance learning modality.

*"Ga-pray nga mainstindihan ang lessons (.) kabay pa nga tsakto ang mga answers. Nan! Kag indi lang ma-failure." (I am praying that I could understand the lessons. Hoping that my answers were correct and I hope that I would not fail.)*

When asked why she considered praying as her coping mechanism, she eagerly answered that,



*"Kay syempre Sir as a Catholic amo gid na Sir mo. Pray, kay kung mag-pray ka kumbaga (.) daw ginagaan ka strength bala Sir nga indi mag-give up." (Of course, Sir, that is the thing as a Catholic. Pray, because if you do, strength will be showered for you not to give up.)*

For Lesley, a prayer is a powerful tool for her as a Catholic as it gives her the strength to keep going, and that is how it works for Rafaela, prayer for courage to sustain her despite all the adversities in remote learning. She emphasized that,

*"gapangamuyo nga:: matapos ko, gaan ko (.) courage nga amo na nga biskan nabudlayan ka (.) makaya mo." (I am praying that I will finish my tasks, I will be given with courage that even though I have a hard time I could still make it.)*

Religions offer a positive perspective on the universe that may imply the existence of a personal transcendental power (God, Allah, Jehovah, etc.) who is compassionate and aware of human needs. The subjective sensation of control over events is also provided by these cognitions like if God is in control, can affect circumstances, and is influenced by prayer. The person's prayer may have a beneficial impact on the scenario (Koenig, 2012). Various psychological means suggest that prayer may relieve stress, develop a sense of well-being, and enhance self-esteem. Additionally, there is evidence that praying and having a favorable attitude toward religion are related to one's happiness, health, and alleviation from suffering (Levine, 2008). This study shows how participants believe in the power of prayer as their tool in achieving triumphs amid the hardships brought by modular distance learning.

#### 3.1.4 Theme 4: War Against the Clock: Setting up Schedules to Manage Time Effectively

Modular distance learning is about self-study; students can study anywhere, anytime, and take off their studies. However, it is a challenge for students to organize their daily activities and tasks so that it is for them to save time for learning since the dark truth is that when students are learning at home, they are going to take more responsibility when they are learning at school.

Calo et al. (2021) concluded in their study that managing time was one of the coping mechanisms of the students to answer their modules and do their work at home. Students have seen this as an effective way to balance their studies and responsibilities. It also satisfies them to finish their tasks in the modules on time.

##### 3.1.4.1 Subtheme 1: Ginatunga ang Olobrahon: Breaking the Tasks Into Manageable Chunks

For Todorov (2017), students must manage time effectively during distance learning by balancing work and study since they control their learning and pace. On the other hand, students seem to adjust distance learning based on the study of Cahapay et al. (2020). They have found that practicing time management is a coping mechanism for some students. They organize their tasks and schedule the subjects they will learn on a specific day and time. Some also answer their worksheets at night because they have a lot of work in the morning.

Esmeralda verified this by practicing time management by dividing her tasks at home and answering her modules. She answers her worksheets at night because she is responsible for their poultry, small business, and babysitting her nephews. She recounted that,

*"ga time management man ko Sir sa akon mga olobrahon sa pagtunga sa akon mga olobrahon kag sa pag-answer sang akon module"><ti, akon na gina gaan*



*ko time ang pag-answer ko or ang pagtuon ko sa module ko kung gab-e na or ang hapon" (I did time management on my tasks by dividing my work and answering modules so, I was giving time answering or studying my modules at night or in the afternoon)*

Balmond practiced time management by allocating time to study and their responsibilities from home. He answered his module by night after work and tried to do it individually. He works on the subjects that he finds easy, followed by subjects that need computer work and seem complex to understand. He uttered,

*"kung gab-e gid ko naga-amat-amat sang obra ko()ginatunga ko lang ang hapos lang danay () ang makaya lang bala aw, tapos ang mga budlay naman (.) kay wala pa ko daan laptop kay mga olobrahon gid nga palitikan mo gid" (I could only work for my study at night, so I'm dividing it from easy tasks to most complex since I don't have a laptop because there are tasks that needs to be analyzed)*

According to Adams et al. (2019), effective time management increases students' academic achievement and lower anxiety. Students could build effective time management by breaking tasks into manageable chunks. Doing this leads students to their ultimate goal as they help themselves manage their thoughts about the process. By focusing on the individual tasks needed to complete the whole project, students can help stay attentive now.

Effective time management by breaking the tasks can be seen based on the responses of Beatrix as she tried to accomplish her modules little by little every day. She revealed that,

*"gina-amat-amat ko gid"><gina-amat-amat ko answer ang ano ang::: makaya ko gina amat-amat"><Sa isa ka adlaw daw isa bi ka module matapos." (I was doing it little by little little by little I was answering the things that I can like finishing one module a day.)*

This coping strategy or actions to overcome the need for modular distance learning can also be seen based on the statements of Kadita. She was breaking her task to care for herself since the doctor recommended limiting her screen time to protect her eyes. She emphasized that

*"Mahatag lang ko guro time sang sa pag-answer sang module 1 to 3 hours tapos pahuwayan ko sa danay one one-hour para daw mas indi sa stressful sa mata." (I would give time to answer the modules about 1 to 3 hours, then I would take a rest for one hour so that it would not be stressful for my eyes.)*

When asked how this practice influenced her, she revealed that it made her feel better as it helps her eyes and refreshes her mind. She stated that,

*"mas okay sa Sir kay at least that time daw mapahuway ko man bala akon nga mata kag akon nga paminsaron para kung mag-answer ko liwat (.) ano na bala refreshing na akon mind" (It is much better at least with those times, my eyes could take a rest, as well as my thoughts so when I answer again. It is refreshing for my mind)*

Misra and McKean (2000, in Young 2017) suggested that one should develop time management skills as it helps reduce stress. They can use a planner, calendar, and reminders to help them manage their time. They should carefully plan their commitments and prioritize



what they must accomplish first. These technique helps students to manage time effectively and help them have more control over their time.

### 3.1.4.2 Subtheme 2: May Timetable, May To-do-list: Establishing Study Schedule

Part-time employment is common among Indonesian students at a public institution in Taiwan, as found by Soelistiyono and Chen (2017). Because of this, they were only half-focused on their primary responsibilities. Similarly, participants participants saw the pandemic as a chance to make ends meet financially, but it had serious implications for their education, particularly in terms of finding the time to complete assignments. However, Edu (2023) recommends using a study schedule as effective time management. Students should start with the big picture in working with a study schedule and then work on the detail. This study schedule will provide direction and instruction in accomplishing tasks. In coping with modular distance learning, participants like Lylia recognized using a study schedule in her "Time Table" to manage time effectively and efficiently. She said,

*"May time table mo, may time table kung san-o mo na i:::-anhon, Timetable"*  
(I have time, time table when I am going to work, Table table)

She described the use and function of her timetable when she shared that,

*"For example, alas-siete (h) mabugtaw ka, alas-otso makaon ko, alas-nueve, alas-dyes imo naman na (.) nga business. Dayon mga tag alas-dies, alas-dose nan sa modules mo na-na; tagaan mo na-na pansin. Pero ang dakoan ko gid ya ang sa modules"* (For example, at seven I would wake up, at eight, I would eat, at nine, at ten, it is for my business. Then at ten to twelve, that is for my modules; I am giving attention to it. Nevertheless, I was allocating much time for my modules.)

As she took a part-time job, Lylia ensured she had more time for her studies than anything else. Angela also mentioned that she had a study schedule in her "To-Do List," where she scheduled the time needed for each task she had to accomplish. She stressed that,

*"actually may ano ko Sir may ginhimo ko nga::: (.) To-Do List di ba ma-schedule gid ko nga ano"* (I made a To-Do List where I schedule the tasks)

She further narrated how her "To-Do List" works; when she continued that,

*"sa::: day may 3 hours ko nga::: ma-self-study. Tapos ma-answer ko da bi module, tapos pagkagab-e amo na na ang mga ano ko kay para lang (.) may makabalo mang gid ko kung ano na da ang biskan ako-ako lang tood (.) pero may mabal-an lang ko biskan gamay lang sa module da. "* (During the day I have 3 hours to self-study. Then I would answer the modules, then at night I would spend it to do my thing for me to learn something though I was doing it by myself, but at least I learn something in the module even just a little.)

Time Management is an important skill needed to succeed in distance learning. It can be drawn from the study that six of the ten participants are trying to manage their time effectively to accommodate their responsibilities at work, home, and school.



### 3.1.5 Theme 5: building bridges: collaborative learning with friends and classmates

According to MacGregor and Smith (1992), collaborative learning involves intellectual efforts made by learners or learners and teachers together. Commonly, learners work in small groups, searching for solutions, understanding, and meaning of the topic, problem, or product. In most cases, collaborative learning activities focus on exploring or applying students' knowledge to the materials and not just presenting or explaining by the teacher. According to Lei et al. (2023), students are more likely to achieve common learning goals when they have frequent opportunities to work together.

#### 3.1.5.1 Subtheme 1: Nagabuliganay para mas Magintsindihanay: Organizing Group Study to Share Ideas

Merritt (2020) acknowledged the effects of the pandemic on students' mental health as they struggle with isolation in distance learning. However, she stressed collaboration as a strategy to overcome difficult lessons, discover boundaries, and find new opportunities in various topics. Angela demonstrated this coping strategy when she narrated that together with her classmate, they share ideas about the lessons given in the modules. In her words,

*"Ligad adlaw nag-ano kami nag-ano kami sang isa ka classmate man bala Sir aw, nag(.) nag-share sang ano namon thoughts namon or idea about sa mga lessons bala nga gina ano gani (.)gina ano ginhatag." (Yesterday, with one of my classmates, we shared our thoughts or ideas about the lesson.)*

Angela emphasized the importance of collaboration or working with peers during this pandemic as she found it difficult to answer the modules alone. She said,

*"Gabuligay lang eh kay kabudlay nga daan subong ,tapos::: kung ano daan ikaw lang gid daan gatudlo sa imo kaugalingon ti, kung kis-a may budlay nga mga ano, nga indi mo ma-instindihan." (We are just helping each other because it hard, then if you're the only one who taught yourself, there are difficulties that you will never understand)*

Roger also collaborates to help him accomplish his tasks in the modules by joining group studies planned by his close friends and classmates. Despite the difficult situation, they meet on weekends and borrow each other's ideas to make a more meaningful experience. He said,

*"ga-ano, ga-group study kami is-a kung weekend man lang bala haw kay para ka-exchange kami mga ideas sa mga classmates ko (.) nami pa gid sa kay naga mayo amon mga obra nga ginapasa bala aw" (We are having group study with my classmates on the weekend sometimes for us to exchange ideas it is really nice because our submitted outputs get better)*

Kadita is also practicing collaboration by sharing ideas with her classmates was one of her ways to cope with the challenges of modular distance learning modality; she accentuated that,

*"friend ko man bala Sir haw">nga didto man sa may WVSU man sa bala">Ga-share-share lang kami ideas bala Sir aw kung ano ni siya." (A friend who is also studying at WVSU shares her ideas about the matter.)*





When asked how collaborating with her friend caused her, she replied,

*"Nang daw mas okay Sir kay at least mapadali siya bala Sir aw nga naga-share kamo ideas like <kung may face-to-face amo man na bay ga-share-share ka man sa mga friends mo kung ano ang iya nga nabal-an"* (Much better Sir since sharing of ideas made it more convenient like when there's a face-to-face that you are sharing what you know to your friends."

For Kadita, working with modules and collaborating with her friends is like when there was a face-to-face class since it makes the heavy load convenient.

### 3.1.5.2 Subtheme 2: Gapangayo Bulig sa Classmate: Seeking a Company for help

The study of Cahapay et al. (2020) revealed that collaborating with peers is one of the coping mechanisms that students apply to overcome the challenges of remote learning. Students seek support from their peers and classmates whenever they cannot understand something about the materials provided to them. This investigation revealed that participants like Beatrix were doing the same when she asked for answers from her close friends and classmates, and they were doing the give-and-take process in answering their modules. She said,

*"kung mabudlayan ko sa module <gapangayo bala man ko answer man syempre sa mga close (.) classmate ko kay:: para lang mangayo ka mahatag ka man sa ila, daw give and take lang"* (If I am having a hard time with the module, I am asking answers to those who are close to me, my classmates so that when they give, I will give back too, it's just like give and take"

She added that their collaboration was beneficial since they could finish the module quickly. She explained that,

*"That way maka:: daw ma-amat-amat mo lang:: man answer ang module mo kag sa amat-amat na daw matapos mo gid."* (That way, just slowly, you could answer the module, and by working gradually, you could finish it."

These actions were quite similar to Lylia, considering that she collaborated with her classmate when answering and understanding the module seemed difficult. She cited that,

*"Ga-ask man ko help sa classmate kung ano to ang ila nga ano dayon kwaan ko na idea kung amo na kay indi gid ko ya ka-gets."* (I am asking help to my classmates then I will get ideas from them whenever I do not understand something.)

Rafaela also collaborated with her friends by sharing their opinions or what they understood in the modules.

*"Kung ano ang ila nainstindihan amo na gina-explain man nila eh, kung ang nainstindihan nila sa sina, daw gahatag man sila opinion."* (What they have understood, they are explaining it, what they have understood, they are giving their opinion)

Lesley was doing the same strategy. Together with her classmates, they used technology to collaborate whenever they did not understand the module topics. She uttered,



*" gapamangkotanay na lang kami sa messenger. ask kami sa isa kag isa kung na-gets mo ni?"* (Sometimes, we ask each other in Messenger. We ask each other if you got this one?)

Most study participants considered collaborative learning with their friends and classmates as a tool to better understand the lesson, accomplish their work just in time, and make learning with modules less complicated. Faja (2013) concluded that building community is crucial to encouraging collaborative learning. Students must be allowed to interact with their peers to foster a sense of connectedness. It is crucial to keep researching the exercises best suited for online collaborative learning. Additionally, they increase each other's understanding of the complex topic and promote interaction and responsibility. In this time of the pandemic, where the future is cloaked, and the education system is continually changing, working with each other or collaborating will matter to survive various challenges that these study participants also practiced.

### 3.2 Insights of the Students from the Experiences in the Modular Distance Learning

Modular distance learning allows students to give the student a new experience which is unusual from face-to-face teaching delivery. In the study by Amir et al. (2020), students preferred classroom learning for discussion rather than distance learning as it enhanced difficulty in communication and gave less learning satisfaction. Though students agreed that distance learning is a more efficient learning method as it provides more time to study and review the learning materials, it still challenges students in terms of time management and difficulty focusing on learning for longer. This study's participants share the same insights as they appreciate face-to-face learning. Moreover, they have gained essential values that help them realize the value of their studies, health, family, and dreams.

#### 3.2.1 Theme 1: *lain man gid ang face-to-face*: appreciating the value and elements of traditional learning

In traditional learning, students were given opportunities to learn with their peers, share their ideas with the group, and discuss their concerns directly about what they needed to do and learn. However, when it was halted, students needed to learn in a confined space at home through their self-learning modules. Challenges in a new mode of instruction allow participants to reflect on their practices during face-to-face learning and think if they go back in time and change their habits, but as they cannot change the past, they are optimistic that they can still work and hope for the future.

Balmond compared his experiences and shared his plans to learn better when schools reopen. In his words,

*"Lain gid ya ang face-to-face bala aw kay syempre mas mainstindihan mo ang lesson (.) kag::: napinsar ko gani nga sang una kis-a waay ko gapamati, pero subong nga ako na lang nagatuon, indi ko man gali kaya (.) mamati na gid ko ya magklase dason liwat sa skwelahan ya."*(Face to face learning is different since you can understand the lesson better and I am thinking about my habits before where I am not listening sometimes, but now I am learning on my own, I can't do it. I will listen carefully next time when schools reopen)



Similarly, Rafaela expressed his appreciation for traditional learning and how distance learning dissuades his confidence in learning. She was a Dean's Lister back then but lost all her hopes because of the pandemic. She stated that,

*"Nami gid ya ang face-to-face, amo gid na akon napinsar ya. Sang una bala matyag ko daw mayo pa ko (.) kay::: naka-Dean's Lister pa ko, pero subong, ambot::: amo na tani mabalik na bala sa school aw (.) bisan once a week lang bi::: lipay na ko"* (Face-to-face learning is great, that's what I have realized. Before, I think I am good enough, because I was a Dean's Lister, but now, I don't know. That's why I am hoping that we can go back at school even just one a week)

Roger also supported her statements when he realized how traditional learning shaped his attitude toward learning.

*"Na-reflect ko nga face-to-face gid ang pinamayo kay sang una ya bi indi man ko tamarin kag gapasa gid ko on time (.) pero subong, ambot ah daw waay na gid ko ya gana::: matyag ko mag-face-to-face balik maganahan naman ko ni kay nami gid."* (I have reflected that face-to-face learning is the best because I was not lazy in the past, and I am passing my outputs on time, but now, I do not know, I am demotivated, but I guess when face-to-face learning comes back, my interest will return.)

The sudden shift in the educational system helps students reflect and realize the essence of teachers who explain and help them understand the lesson better. When modular distance learning was utilized, students could communicate with their teachers through instant messaging (Messenger), primarily through group chats where they could air their concerns. Though teachers respond to them during class hours, distant learners realize they can explore and get into what they are learning.

Esmeralda shared her realization. She mentioned that learning with teachers is different as they are helping them understand the lesson with their additional inputs and explanation.

*"Na-pinsar ko gid nga::: lain gid ya gali ang teacher (.) I mean lain gid bala kung may teacher aw (.) kay::: ina balang::: may matun-an ka gid kay mabulig sa imo ya nga mainstindihan ang lesson mo><na-explain"* (I realized that, learning is different when there is a teacher because they will help you understand the lesson as they explains it.)

Lylia also shared the exact reflection: She feels grateful that she took Elementary Education and sees her future career's value. She said,

*"Mas Nakita ko subong nga pandemic ang importansya sang mga maistra (.) grabe gid gali ang ila nga bulig kay sang-una daw gaskwela ta daw okay lang nga ara si Ma'am (.) pero subong wala gid ka gali may matun-an sa module kung indi ka pagbuligan sang maistra. Sang una di pa ko namian nga nag-educ ko><subong lipay ko kay importante man gali sa."* (I saw the importance of teachers because of this pandemic as are a great helping hand because in the past I don't appreciate them much. Now, I cannot learn something from the module without teachers' assistance. Before, I don't like the course I have chosen but now I am happy as I appreciate it)

Moreover, Lesley has learned that working with teachers patiently is essential for a student like her to win while learning in the middle of the pandemic. Her aunt is a public school



teacher, and she saw the struggles just to deliver instruction; that is why she appreciates the essence of teachers even more and strives to become one in the future.

*“Pinsar ko nga, grabe ang struggle sang mga teachers subong indi lang kami (.) makita ko si Tita nga gabaka-baka, gapaminsar gid ko nga maeskwela gid ko mayo. Budlay tood pero need namon mag-learn kag subong namon mas kinahanglan ang mga teachers” (I have realized that teachers are struggling right now, not just us. I have seen my aunt working real hard, I kept in my that I have to study wel. It’s difficult, but I have learn and in this time we need teachers the most.)*

Modular distance learning brought students essential insights, and these are the appreciation of traditional face-to-face learning and value teachers even more because of their power to explain to understand the lesson better. They must understand that traditional face-to-face learning helps them build their mental, emotional, and mental skills because of its important elements, like teachers and classmates, that nurture their learning experiences.

### 3.2.2 Theme 2: padayon para sa gugma: realizing that is for the love for oneself, dreams, and family

More than the coping mechanisms formulated by the students to adjust to the situation, students have realized essential life lessons that made them strong despite the challenges of modular distance learning. Participants of these studies have realized that beyond any reasons why they keep on learning; it is for love for the self, dreams or ambitions in life, and most importantly, for their family that has high hopes for them.

Lylia claimed that her most important realization is to strive harder to reach her dreams despite the unpredictable situation. She uttered,

*“pinakaportante ko pa nga na learn is kinahanglan lang gid magtingwa kay especially sa <kung may ara ko handom ti kinahanglan gid nakon mag-strive gid para malab-ot gid biskan gaka-feel na nakon kis-a nga daw::: wala tupa ang pag-eskwela pero still sa gihapon ano dyapon padayon lang gid gihapon sa pagtuon.” (The most important thing that I have learned is to strive if you have dreams that needs to be achieved. Though sometimes I feel like everything is useless, still I am pursuing my studies.)*

Beatrix added that someone should not give up when things get hard since these experiences are just trying to make someone stronger. In her words,

*“Indi mag-give up (.) kay syempre Sir, trials lang ni mo. Malampuwasan gid ni someday.” (Do not give up cause all of these are just trials. We can overcome these someday.)*

Angela added,

*“biskan indi mo na makaya, biskan gakadulaan ka na sang gana sa pag-eskwela sa pag-answer sang module kag pag-interact na sang imo nga module gapursige ka bala dyapon Sir aw nga matapos ni kag matapos ni” (Though you cannot do it anymore, though you are losing the interest to study and answer the module, still I pursue everything that I can make it*



Angela added that one should never lose hope when one sometimes feels one cannot make it or lose interest in answering modules. Still, pursue that you can make it. This is similar to Kadita's determination as she understands that everything is for her dreams to be attained, for herself to be satisfied, and for her family to be considered.

*“permi ko gid panumdumon nga (.) may mga pangarap ka, may mga(.) may mga gusto ka (.) abutin para sa iyong sarili, para rin sa pamilya”*(I always keep in mind that I have ambitions for myself and for my family that I need to attain.)

Moreover, Selena realized that their concern for herself and her love for her family became the main reason for her fight. She understands that her family and future family need her, so she needs to work on things better, and everything will be worth it if she tries her best. She uttered,

*“na-realize ko pamilya ko gid ni ang rason kung nga-a ga baka-baka ko ya (.)nga dapat kayanon gid tanan nga ginaagyan mo subong, kay para man ni sa imo, para man ni sa mga pamilya mo kag sa magiging pamilya mo(.) Kag sa ulihi mahambal mo sa kaugalingon mo nga (.) mahambal mo sa kaugalingon mo nga ini nga mga experiences nga naagyan mo (.) worth it gid kung gapaningwa ka lang. (I have realized that my family is the reason why I keep on working harder and I can bear everything that I have been through because of it is for myself, my family, and future family . In the end I can say to myself that all of these experiences are worth it because I am trying my best.*

Perhaps, participants have understood that they cannot change the reality but can change their attitude toward the situation. However, participants have realized that face-to-face mode of instruction. It is the most effective way of learning because of the presence of teachers. It can still be noted that they understand the situation rationally as they keep in mind their love for themselves, dreams, and family, and for them, it is enough to move forward.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

The participants employed coping strategies like motivating themselves by focusing on their goals and inspiration, being positive and persistent despite the difficulties, building self-regulating strategies, conditioning themselves to keep going, trusting themselves and being self-confident, and being happy.

Moreover, for those problems that seemed too complicated for these students to handle, they resorted to praying to cope with the demands of modular distance learning. They believed prayer is the best medicine and a way to communicate with God to overcome difficulties. Whenever they felt unmotivated, they asked God to provide them with knowledge and understanding to answer their module and succeed. It was also a way for them to ask for courage and sustainment, especially during desperate times.

Time management was an essential skill that distant learners had practiced, and some participants managed their time effectively by setting up schedules through their “study table,” “timetable,” or “To-Do List.” These students also tried to balance their work and study by setting up schedules in their minds and breaking their tasks to perform their every responsibility.

Furthermore, these students recognized that collaborating with their friends and classmates was one way to overcome the challenges of the modular distance learning modality. They shared their thoughts and ideas with their friends and classmates to see various





perspectives of the complex tasks, activities, or questions they were undertaking. With this strategy, students acknowledged that it increased their understanding of the complex topics and could finish their module just in time.

It can be drawn from the study that as the students experienced various difficulties in shifting to modular distance learning modality, students were practicing ways to cope with the situation. Hence, students struggled to adjust to the new mode of instructional delivery, yet they embraced these challenges as tools for their success. For instance, when they struggled to understand the modules, they collaborated with their friends and classmates to accomplish their modules. Meanwhile, they set up schedules when managing their priorities at home, and studies were hard for them. Moreover, students motivated themselves for the challenges they had experienced because of the internet connection, module retrieval and submission, uncomfortable learning environment, and lack of technology. They prayed to God or took a break when they felt too much stress.

From these lived experiences, students were able to appreciate the value and elements of traditional learning wherein they can interact with their classmates in real-time inside the classroom, ask the teacher questions about the topic that they find difficult, and listen to the lecture where they can better understand the topic even better. Students could realize its value as they were confined in a space where they had no choice but to accomplish the learning modules on their own and try their best to understand the new and complex concepts. Also, with face-to-face learning, students are more competitive, outstanding, and explorative with the additional input of their classmates and teachers. They also have realized the value of the course they have taken at the university and become more determined to finish it as they have seen the efforts of their teachers to deliver quality education, which is one of the university's core values. Moreover, students have realized that they keep pushing on despite the difficulty of modular distance learning because of their love for themselves, their dreams, and family. While staying at home, they have seen the sacrifices of their parents and become more motivated to help them rise from poverty. They have realized that they are the ones who can help themselves, and that is why they should not give up. They cannot change reality, but their attitude toward their reality can be; thus, becoming more positive, persistence, and forward-thinking would help them progress in the present situation.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for students, it has also provided opportunities for development and learning. In addition to learning more about themselves and their skills, students have grown to understand the importance of traditional education. They have also understood the value of tenacity and resilience and are now better prepared to handle difficulties.

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