

Research Article

Academic experiences of shs learners studying english in distance modular approach: A phenomenological study

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ABSTRACT

This study intended to explore and understand the academic experiences of senior high school students studying English in a distance modular approach. The researchers investigated the academic experiences, the challenges encountered, the techniques in facing challenges, and the suggestions in addressing the challenges. The four Grade 12 SHS learners of General Santos City National High School, one representing each track: Academic, TVL, Sports, and Arts and design, were the participants of this study who were selected through purposive sampling. The current qualitative inquiry is phenomenological in nature. The data were interpreted through coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing. It revealed that the academic experiences of the senior high school students are categorized into two themes; 1. Learners' Learning Preferences and Time Management and 2. Learners' Difficulty in Learning English. The learners experienced difficulty in understanding and comprehending lessons in English subjects. The findings also showed the learners' learning preferences and the techniques employed in time management like the time blocking method. The challenges were the learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation specifically rooted from being unmotivated and lacking parental support in tackling their learning difficulty; learners' learning preferences and time management specifically identifying their lack of time management technique; learning environment at home that shows unstable network connection and inability to allocate specific time for school work and chores; and learners' difficulty in learning English that shows the difficulty in understanding and comprehending lessons in English subjects.

Keywords: modular distance learning; studying english; academic experience; distance modular approach

1. INTRODUCTION

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic changed the system of teaching and learning delivery throughout the world. The sudden shift from face-to-face teaching to the distance learning approach brought about numerous issues pertaining to the accessibility of education especially in third world countries. Concerns in digital divide and the access to technology became a huge dilemma in many schools worldwide. UNICEF (2020) emphasized the need for the continuity of learning during school closures. It further underscored the importance of the academe to utilize distance learning approach to facilitate learning even amidst the global health crisis. Recently, many schools mostly from western part of the world have already reopened, but other countries in Asia like the Philippines still prohibit face-to-face modality until now due to the continued threat of the deadly virus.

The Education for All (EFA) Law of the Department of Education holds true with its mandate that no learner must be left behind (Department of Education). Thus, education must continue despite the pandemic. DepEd responded to the challenge by employing distance learning modalities under the stringent limitations from the Department of Health and Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) since the academic year 2020-2021 up to the present (Llego, 2020). The schools in all levels adopted one or a combination of different learning delivery modalities for the learners considering the school and locality milieu. Distance learning modality was instituted, and required both teachers and learners to be in a school scenario even in geographical separation. Modular distance learning, online distance learning, blended distance learning including radio-based instruction (RBI) and TV-based instruction (TVBI) were utilized to assist learning at home.

The Regional Directors upon the recommendation of the School Division Offices of the Department of Education decided on the distance delivery modality depending on what is deemed appropriate for the school contexts in the country (Department of Education). The modular distance learning among others is the most accessible compared to all other modalities, and the self-learning modules (SLM) in printed and digital copies became the major learning material resource in all levels in the primary and secondary schools in the Department of Education. Malaya (2020) explained that the interaction between the students and teachers in modular approach is carried out through the telephone via text messaging and calls, e-mails, and other instant messaging methods. The parents at home serve as assistants and para-teachers to

their children learning under the modular approach.

There have been studies conducted to investigate on the challenges encountered by the teachers and the lived experiences of parents concerning the use of self-learning modules in the new normal setting. Bautista and Dacillo (2020) found out based on the findings of their study that the teachers as respondents from Nasugbu Elementary School in Batangas experienced challenges using modules with their learners studying English. Furthermore, Guiamalon (2021) conducted a study focusing on the issues and concerns of teachers on the use of modular learning modality within the Buluan District, Division of Maguindanao. Moreover, the perspective of the parents assisting multiple learners using self-learning modules was probed in a study of Añoda (2021). Thus, it is the researchers' intent to investigate in a deeper sense the other end of the modular learning from the perspective of the learners who utilize the modules. We aspire to explore the academic experiences of the senior high school students studying English in modular distance approach. It is also our goal to discover the challenges the students experienced in the use of self-learning modules.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The current qualitative inquiry is phenomenological in nature. The lived experiences of the senior high school students studying in English in distance modular approach were explored to reveal their challenges, their means in mitigating their situation, and their perceived suggestions in addressing their challenges. The data were collected through two sets of interview among the participants. The data were interpreted through coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing. The participants of this study were the senior high school students of General Santos City National High School who were selected through purposive sampling. The researchers had identified four Grade 12 Senior High School learners, one representing each track: Academic, TVL, Sports, and Arts and design. The identities of the participants were not recognized by their names in this study. Instead, the participants were identified as P1, P2, P3, and P4. This is to ensure the privacy of the learners. The research locale is General Santos City National High School (GSCNHS)-SHS, the largest secondary school in Region-12. The school population comprises 13, 714 learners both from the Junior and Senior High School departments. The Senior High school department alone reached 3, 116 learners, 1,754 from Grade 11 and 1,362 from Grade 12 respectively. The school is strategically situated at Rizal St. Barangay Calumpang, General Santos City, Region 12 in the southern part of Mindanao.

The following processes were employed in this current study:

Phase One. The researchers identified the phenomenon which became the focus of this explorative endeavor. The educational system in the new normal appealed to the researchers since both are teaching at the Department of Education in the secondary lower and upper levels. The researchers desired to explore the lived experiences of the learners studying English using distance modular approach.

Phase Two. The succeeding phase was the identification of the research locale and the participants in the study. The researchers convened that the senior high school students who are enrolled in the upper secondary level to be feasible participants because they are considered to be more of the independent learners. There were four identified participants chosen to represent the four tracks in senior high school, the academic track, the TVL track, Arts and Design track, and Sports track. The participants are enrolled at General Santos City National High School in Region 12.

Phase Three. The third phase will be the seeking of consent from the principal of General Santos City National High School. A formal letter signed by the researchers will be handed to the school head to ask for permission to conduct an interview with the four senior high school participants.

Phase Four. This phase was devoted for the data gathering activity. The two sets of video-recorded interview were conducted to the participants via Google Meet. The first set was scheduled for the purpose of setting rapport with the participants, and to get to know them more so that confidence and trust can be established early on. The second set became the source of data investigated in this study.

Phase Five. This penultimate phase was for coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing of the data gathered through a video-recorded interview. Transcription was done once the recorded-interview was finished. To provide an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants in the study, the highlighting of the sentences, quotes, and statements were made.

Phase Six. The last phase was the presentation of the results of the study according to the sequence of purpose or problems. The presentation of the summary of findings, the formulation of conclusion, and the offering of recommendations were done in this last stage of the research investigation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and data analysis of the information gathered that answered the problems focused on in this study. To answer the research questions number 1 to 4, the senior high school participants were interviewed online. The responses were analyzed and interpreted with the use of codes which were grouped as categories and then themes were identified to determine the academic experiences of the participants studying English in modular distance approach. Table 1 to Table 4 present the verbatim responses of the Senior High School students to the interview questions regarding their academic experiences, the challenges encountered, techniques in facing challenges, and suggestions in addressing the challenges in studying English in distance modular approach.

3.1 The Academic Experiences of the Senior High School Students

Table 1 shows the academic experiences of the senior high school students studying English in modular distance approach.

Table 1. The Academic Experiences of the Senior High School Students

Codes	Categories	Themes
Time blocking technique	Learners' Time Management with Learning Preferences	Learners' Learning Preferences and Time Management
Difficulty in understanding English	Learners' Difficulty in understanding and comprehending lessons/texts (English Subject)	Learners' Difficulty in Learning English
Time management	Learner's Study Time Management	Learners' Learning Preferences and Time Management
Time management	Learner's Study Time Management	Learners' Learning Preferences and Time Management

P1 utilized a time management technique called time blocking which helped her allocate tasks in specific blocks of time. P3 managed her time by planning and finishing her tasks one at a time to avoid stress. P4 worked on his modules in English at an allocated time in his class schedule. However, P2 expressed her difficulty in understanding English. It revealed that the academic experiences of the senior high school students are categorized into two themes; 1. Learners' Learning Preferences and Time Management and 2. Learners' Difficulty in Learning English. The learners experienced difficulty in understanding and comprehending lessons in English subjects. The findings also showed the learners' learning preferences and the techniques employed in time management like the time blocking method. The learners' difficulty in learning English revealed in this study is similar to the experiences of the learners in the study conducted by Panganiban, G. and Madrigal, D. (2021). They found out that the students' difficulty in learning under modular approach was due to the students' lack of readiness for independent reading and learning. Despite the difficulty in learning, the respondents capitalized on time management techniques in order to go about their academic responsibilities. Time blocking is a simple planning method which divides time into smaller blocks for specific tasks to accomplish (Carroll, R., 2021). This can be another technique that learners can use to develop time management in going about their academic tasks under the modular learning. Table 2. presents the challenges encountered by the senior high school students studying English under the modular distance approach.

Table 2. Challenges Encountered by the Senior High School Students

Codes	Categories	Themes
unmotivated	Learners' Motivation	Learners' Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation
Time management	Learner's Study Time Management	Learners' Learning Preferences and Time Management
Stable network disruptions Pressure, difficulty in comprehending questions	Unstable Connections Learners' Difficulty in understanding and comprehending lessons/texts (English Subject)	Learning Environment at Home Learners' Difficulty in Learning English
Time management/Learning environment Parental supervision or support/ learning difficulty	Learning Environment Learners' Internal and External Learning Support	Learning Environment at Home Learners' Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Table 2 discloses the challenges experienced by the senior high school students tackling English subjects under the modular distance modality. Their challenges were the learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation specifically rooted from being unmotivated and lacking parental support in tackling their learning difficulty; learners' learning preferences and time management specifically identifying their lack of time management technique; learning environment at home that shows unstable network connection and inability to allocate specific time for school work and chores; and learners' difficulty in learning English that shows difficulty in understanding and comprehending lessons in English subjects. The participants experienced varied difficulties in tackling lessons in English using the self-learning modules. P1 confessed that her self-motivation was slowly diminishing. She was only making her outputs for compliance. P2 was inclined to disregarding English subject at times because she was working on other modules which demanded more of her time. P3 struggled due to unstable internet connection while experiencing pressure concerning lessons he didn't understand. Similar to P3, P4 went through a struggle not having enough knowledge how to tackle his tasks on the module. He also suffered not being able to juggle his tasks for school and his chores at home well. In the study of Abante, A. et al. (2021), they discovered from the teacher-respondents from public and private schools that the students experienced difficulty in the modular distance modality which resulted to a learning gap. The researchers also emphasized the suggestions made by the teachers in terms of parental supervision and constant communication with the teachers in order to mitigate the learners' difficulty. Dangle, Y. and Sumaoang, J. (2020) found out from the student-respondents that their challenges were about the home environment causing different distractions; overwhelming tasks on the modules causing less time for sleeping; and independent study. Table 3 provides information on the techniques used by the participants in facing

challenges while studying English through modular distance delivery.

Table 3. Techniques in Facing Challenges

Codes	Categories	Themes
Provision of learning resources at home	Learning Resources Available at Home/ Supplementary Materials	Learning Environment at Home
Internal and external learning support	Learners' Internal and External Learning Support	Learners' Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation
Communication with teachers	Teacher's monitoring and feedback mechanisms	Teacher's monitoring and feedback mechanisms
Persevere in studying despite difficulty in understanding	Learners' Difficulty in understanding and comprehending lessons/texts (English Subject)	Learners' Difficulty in Learning English
Learning preference / time management stress reliever	Learners' Time Management with Learning Preferences Learners' Motivation	Learners' Learning Preferences and Time Management Learners' Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation
time management	Learner's Study Time Management	Learners' Learning Preferences and Time Management

It is manifested in Table 3 that the participants employed several techniques in facing the challenges they experience under the modular learning in English subjects. The techniques were learning environment at home where the participant took advantage of the availability of internet connection for studying; learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through internal and external learning support from parents, teachers, classmates, school mates, and through learner's motivation; teacher's monitoring and feedback mechanisms; persevering to study despite the learners' difficulty in learning English; and the learners' learning preferences and time management. P1 utilized every available learning resource she had at home like her stable internet connection, encyclopedia, dictionaries, and books. Moreover, she reached to her friends, classmates, and schoolmates for assistance. She also took the initiative to communicate with her teachers on school matters that concerned her. P2 employed persistence in studying even those she had difficulty on. P3 preferred working on her modules at night when there was less distraction from his environment. He did advance reading on his lessons whenever he finished ahead of time in some outputs. He also took time playing video games to relive stress. Finally, P4 strategized by keeping his schedule. He worked on his modules at their allocated time of the day. Gueta, M. and Janer, S. (2021) conducted a study identifying the challenges met by the teachers, pupils, and parents in the use of self-learning modules. The pupils' perceived challenges were concentrated on time management, comprehension, motivation, and independent learning. These similar challenges are encountered by the participants of this current study. Table 4 indicates the suggestions of the participants in addressing challenges experienced in modular learning approach in studying English.

Table 4. Suggestion in Addressing the Challenges

Codes	Categories	Themes
Self-interest and motivation	Learners' Motivation	Learners' Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation
teachers' teaching strategies and interactive supplementary materials	Teacher's creative and interactive strategies	Teacher's creative and interactive strategies
self-confidence, self-esteem, self-motivation	Learners' Motivation	Learners' Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation
self-motivation	Learners' Motivation	Learners' Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation
time management / to-do-list technique	Learners' Time Management with Learning Preferences	Learners' Learning Preferences and Time Management
Teachers' orientation, monitoring, feedbacking	Teacher's monitoring and feedback mechanisms	Teacher's monitoring and feedback mechanisms
module distribution-retrieval timeline/ strategy	School's Module Distribution-Retrieval Timeline and Strategy	School's Module Distribution-Retrieval Timeline and Strategy

The participants suggested ways which they believe will address the challenges in studying English under the modular distance approach. P1 recommended for the teachers to apply extra effort in making learning interesting and by being creative in choosing and providing additional learning materials that will aid students in the learning process under modular approach. P2 desired to develop more self-confidence despite the difficulty in learning in English subject. P3 cited using to-do-list to organize his tasks and to avoid being lazy. Lastly, P4 suggested that they be taught how to understand their lessons and to allow them to work on their modules one per week to give them ample time. The suggestions in addressing the challenges experienced in studying English under the modular distance approach are categorized in the following themes. The participants proposed for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through self-interest, self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-motivation; teacher's creative and interactive strategies with the use of interactive supplementary materials; learners' learning preferences and time management with to-do list technique; teacher's

monitoring and feedback mechanisms; and school's module distribution-retrieval timeline and strategy. Aksan, J. (2021) recommended in her study that teacher's guidance among the students with special attention in learning Math in modular distance approach is necessary for academic improvement. Moreover, she also emphasized that self-learning modules must be crafted in such a way that it becomes easy to navigate and learn from.

3.2 Discussion

This study explored on the academic experiences of the senior high school students of General Santos City National High School studying English under modular distance approach. The four respondents represented the four tracks of senior high school. They were interviewed virtually through Google Meet teleconferencing platform. The responses were qualitatively analyzed to reveal categories and themes that identify the academic experiences of the participants. To answer the first research question about the academic experiences of the Senior High School students studying English using the distance modular approach, the qualitative analysis specified (1) Learners' Learning Preferences and Time Management and (2) Learners' Difficulty in Learning English. Similar to the present study, Sespene, M. et.al. (2021) investigated the macro and micro context factors in English language learning using the modular distance approach through their descriptive-correlational study among the 189 secondary students. This investigation revealed that the macro context factors included poor feedback mechanism, insufficient resources, lack of assistance from knowledgeable others, and unconducive to learning environment among the many. The micro context factors on the other hand reflected lack of exposure and practice, lack of perceived competence, and lack of interest and motivation.

To answer the second research question about challenges experienced by the senior high school students tackling English subjects under the modular distance modality, the qualitative data derived from the interview revealed the learners' challenges in terms of learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; learners' learning preferences and time management; learning environment at home; and learners' difficulty in learning English. Comparable challenges were identified in the following studies. Bayucca, S. (2021) identified the difficulty of the 10 learner-respondents in understanding English as one of the challenges among many others in learning with the use of modular distance approach. Moreover, De Claro, W. (2021) recounted poor time management as one of the greatest challenges in the implementation of modular distance learning of the students in grade 10 Agoncillo from Taal National High School. To answer the third research question about the techniques in facing challenges, this study suggests learning environment at home; learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; teacher's monitoring and feedback mechanisms; persevering to study despite the learners' difficulty in learning English; and the learners' learning preferences and time management. Barcenas, J. and Bibon, M. (2021) reported the coping mechanisms by the island school students from the difficulties encountered studying under the distance modular modality. The 260 major informants in the study from Cagraray Island on the eastern coast of Bicol region sought assistance in working on the self-learning modules from knowledgeable people around them apart from their parents who did not have any capacity to extend academic support for the learners. Additionally, the participants employed time management by organizing modules and answering the tasks therein according to their difficulty levels.

To answer the last research question about the suggestions in addressing the challenges, the participants through an interview stressed out intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; teacher's creative and interactive strategies; learners' learning preferences and time management; teacher's monitoring and feedback mechanisms; and school's module distribution-retrieval timeline and strategy. The foregoing challenges of the learners using modular distance learning can be mitigated if online distance learning will be implemented in schools so that the learners and their parents can be assisted by the teachers (Anzaldo, M., 2021). On the other hand, Rotas, E. and Cahapay M. (2021) stated that the 32 university students employed numerous coping strategies namely seeking professional assistance from the teacher; soliciting family and peer support for learning resources, having conducive area and appropriate time for study; expending intrinsic initiatives like time management, self-regulation, and organized study scheme; outpouring of emotion like crying; and praying for providence. Another measure in addressing the challenges learning during the pandemic is presented in the survey research of Santillan and Labaria (2021) which revealed that the selected college students of Western Philippine University External Campuses received motivation, encouragement, and inspiration from their professors even in the distance modular learning. Furthermore, Castroverde, F. and Acala, M. (2021) proposed time management as means for the 10 professional secondary teachers in addressing challenges in modular distance approach.

4. CONCLUSION

It can be deduced in this study that the academic experiences of the senior high school students were identified on their learning preferences, time management, and their difficulty in studying English under the modular distance approach. The study further revealed the challenges encountered by the participants on their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and learning environment at home. However, the participants employed techniques in facing the challenges by acquiring an ideal learning environment at home; using intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; having teacher's monitoring and feedback mechanisms; persevering to study despite their difficulty in learning English; and using learning preferences and time management. Furthermore, suggestions in addressing the challenges were offered in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; teacher's creative and interactive strategies; learners' learning preferences and time management; teacher's monitoring and feedback mechanisms; and school's module distribution-retrieval timeline and strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions gleaned from this study, recommendations are offered for consideration:

For the school and the teachers

1. The school administrators are enjoined to apply module distribution-retrieval timeline and strategy to facilitate for

the convenient use of the self-learning modules for the learners.

2. It is recommended that the teachers should adapt monitoring and feedback mechanisms in guiding the learners tackle learning using the modular distance approach.
3. The teachers should provide extrinsic motivation for the learners in order to make learning under the modular distance approach meaningful.
4. The teachers should provide remediation initiatives to address the difficulty of the learners studying English using the self-learning modules.

For the parents

1. The parents must provide motivation for their learners in any possible form so that learning can happen at home under parental supervision and guidance.
2. A conducive learning environment may be provided at home where the learners can focus on learning with the use of the self-learning modules.
3. The learners at home should be provided with internet or data connectivity that can be used to aid modular distance learning.

For the learners

1. The learners may seek assistance and make communication lines open with their teachers in times when answering the modules becomes a challenge.
2. They are encouraged to utilize time management techniques in working on their modules.
3. The students need to craft a scheme for their learning preferences under the modular distance approach.
4. The students should derive any form of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from among the people around them to persevere in learning despite difficulties.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

The main author considered the design and analysis, collected the data, performed the analysis, and wrote the paper. The co-author deliberated with the design of the research, collected the data, and performed the coding and thematic analysis.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicting interests of any kind in the submission of this research paper.

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