

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

2023, Vol. 4, No. 10, 3572 – 3590

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.04.10.14>

Research Article

Strategic Assessment of AIMS Students' Learning Opportunities and Challenges During the New Normal

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Article history:

Submission August 2023

Revised October 2023

Accepted October 2023

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the learning opportunities and challenges faced by students at the Asian Institute of Maritime Studies (AIMS) in response to the sudden shift to online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. AIMS, like many educational institutions in the Philippines, adapted to the new normal setting by implementing online learning with all its facets. While this setup opened up new opportunities for students, it also presented various challenges.

The research involved 337 AIMS students from the 2021-2022 academic year, using a descriptive-comparative design to assess differences in opportunities gained and challenges experienced. The participants were selected through a combination of purposive and random sampling. Data was collected using a standardized instrument consisting of three parts: profiling respondents, determining opportunities gained using the "Synchronous Online Teaching Observation Checklist" from the City University of New York (2020), and assessing challenges through the self-report online learning challenge questionnaire by Barrot et al. (2021), modified for the study. Statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, weighted mean, T-test, and ANOVA were utilized for data analysis.

Results indicated that students perceived opportunities in Assessment and Feedback, Student Engagement, Learning Environment, Time Management, and Instructional Design. On the other hand, they expressed neutrality towards challenges related to Technological Sufficiency, Student Isolation, Technological Complexity, Self-Regulation, and Learning Environment. Further analysis revealed significant differences in learning opportunities based on gender and program. Recommendations include providing platform usage training, offering specialized learning activities based on courses and programs, and ensuring gender-sensitive learning opportunities.

Keywords: *Asian Institute of Maritime Studies, Educational Challenges, Learning Opportunities, New Normal*

How to cite:

Giner, R. V. (2023). Strategic Assessment of AIMS Students' Learning Opportunities and Challenges During the New Normal. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. 4(10), 3572 – 3590. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.04.10.14

Introduction

The sudden onset of the Covid-19 pandemic created an enormous shift in the learning pedagogy of most Schools and Universities in the Philippines. It led institutions to abruptly adapt online learning with all its needed facets. Although distance learning is not something new to some higher educational institutions, most were still grounded on the rudiments of face-to-face learning. The tremendous efforts done by school administrators, academic managers, and faculty members to be equipped for online classes were not just the challenging part in adapting to the so-called new normal setting in education, but also the availability of the technology that supports it.

It has almost been two years since online classes were implemented and different learning opportunities and challenges from the end of the students have risen along the way. The Asian Institute of Maritime Studies (AIMS) was one of those institutions that embarked, responded, and recognized the need for innovations. The shift from traditional face-to-face classes to online learning propelled the management to implement distance learning in terms of utilizing new learning modalities where students will be catered to with the same quality of teaching and learning process. Likewise, instructional materials, classroom guidelines, learning management systems, and grading systems were prioritized since they were deemed necessary to continue providing good quality services to the students while uplifting the educational system of AIMS to an entirely new learning process.

According to Joaquin (2020), even though Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) fully observed and adapted online learning which includes alternative modes and technologies in delivering education, there are still gaps and challenges in the realization of online learning.

According to Chhetri and Pokhrel (2021), "World-wide school systems have been severely affected by the Covid-19 epidemic, involving approximately 1.6 billion students in more than 200 countries". This was considered to be the largest educational initiative in human history. The modification brought to the lives of many resulted in social segregation and

movement restrictions, thus disrupting the traditional education process people were used to.

In the study of Barrot et al. (2020), the authors cited the results of different studies that are related to the present study. Hew et al. (2020) conducted a parallel study in which they used a cloud-based video conferencing program to convert traditional classrooms into completely online classroom instruction. According to their findings, these two categories of learning settings were equally efficient. They also provided advice on how to successfully implement online classes supported by videoconferencing. Barrot, et al. cited as well the study Suryaman et al. (2020) in which their research indicated that learning at home presented many difficulties for pupils, including a lack of technological know-how, high Internet prices, and low levels of interest and sociability. Kapasia et al. (2020) looked into the effects of lockdown on pupils' learning performance in a related study. Their findings showed that the lockdown significantly disrupted the learning process for the children. The students also mentioned various difficulties they ran into while taking their classes online. These include social exclusion, sadness, bad Internet, and negative home learning environments, which are made worse when children come from these backgrounds. Barrot et al. also cited that contrary to Kapasia et al.'s (2020) findings, in the same study, they examined how lockdown affects pupils' learning performance in a related study. Their findings showed that the lockdown significantly disrupted students' ability to learn. The students also discussed some difficulties they had with their online lessons. These problems are exacerbated among marginalized and remote students and include anxiety, sadness, bad Internet, and unpleasant home learning environments. Khalil et al. (2020), in contrast to the previous study, qualitatively investigated the effectiveness of synchronized online learning in a Saudi Arabian medical school. The research revealed that, generally speaking, students had favorable opinions of synchronous online learning, particularly in terms of effectiveness and time management. They also identified technological (poor tool usability and poor internet

access), behavioral (individual personality), and methodological (content delivery) challenges. Their research also showed how the online learning environment fails to match the needs of courses that require hands-on experience, despite efforts to construct virtual laboratories. Barrot et al (2020) further cited parallel study by Adarkwah (2021), through the use of a narrative inquiry methodology, the authors investigated how students experienced online learning during the pandemic. The results showed that Ghanaian students believed online education was unsuccessful because of a number of difficulties they ran across. These included a lack of student social engagement, inadequate communication, a lack of ICT tools, and subpar academic results. Day et al. (2021), who conducted the study more recently, looked at how COVID-19 affected students' learning experiences right away. Evidence from six institutions in three countries showed both pre-existing disparities and some beneficial experiences. Lack of proper technology, inadequate home learning environments, student stress, and restricted access to laboratories and field-work are a few of the issues mentioned.

Citing all the literatures above, the study is therefore fitting to be conducted to determine how AIMS is addressing the needs of its students. Thus, the main thrust of this study is to assess the AIMS students' learning opportunities and challenges in the new normal setting of education. Generally applying descriptive research, the author of this paper intends to assess the AIMS students' learning opportunities and challenges in the new normal setting in education. The results will provide valuable inputs to the AIMS management in order to address the educational gaps brought about by the new normal setting.

Pondering on the above rationale and supported by the different theoretical basis, the main thrust of this study is to assess the opportunities and challenges of AIMS students' learning in the new normal as the students were introduced to new methods of learning and instruction. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the AIMS students in terms of the following;
 - 1.1. Age;
 - 1.2. Gender;
 - 1.3. Program;
 - 1.4. Academic year level; and,
 - 1.5. Civil Status?
2. What are the learning opportunities gained by the AIMS students under the new normal education?
 - 2.1. Instructional design;
 - 2.2. Time management;
 - 2.3. Learning environment;
 - 2.4. Student engagement; and,
 - 2.5. Assessment and feedback?
3. Based on the following categories, what challenges do AIMS students experienced as they engage with the online learning environment?
 - 3.1. Self-regulation challenges;
 - 3.2. Technological literacy and competency challenges;
 - 3.3. Student isolation challenges;
 - 3.4. Technological sufficiency challenges;
 - 3.5. Technological complexity challenges; and,
 - 3.6. Learning environment challenges?
4. Is there a significant difference in the learning opportunities gained and challenges experienced by the respondents when grouped according to their profile?

Hypothesis. There is no significant difference in the learning opportunities gained and challenges experienced by the respondents when grouped according to their profiles.

This study focused on assessing the learning opportunities gained and challenges confronted by students enrolled in the Asian Institute of Maritime Studies from the Academic Year 2021 to 2022. The coverage of the study were the students enrolled in the School of Maritime Business (SMB) and the School of Merchant Marine (SMM). Specifically, the target respondents were the BSCA, BSBA, BSCS, and BSHM students for the SMB and BSMT, and BSMarE students for the SMM. A self-made survey questionnaire was the main data-gathering instrument to yield the pertinent data for the study.

The main thrust of this study is to assess the opportunities and challenges of AIMS students' learning in the new normal as they were

introduced to the new method of instruction – the online learning modality.

Conceptual Framework

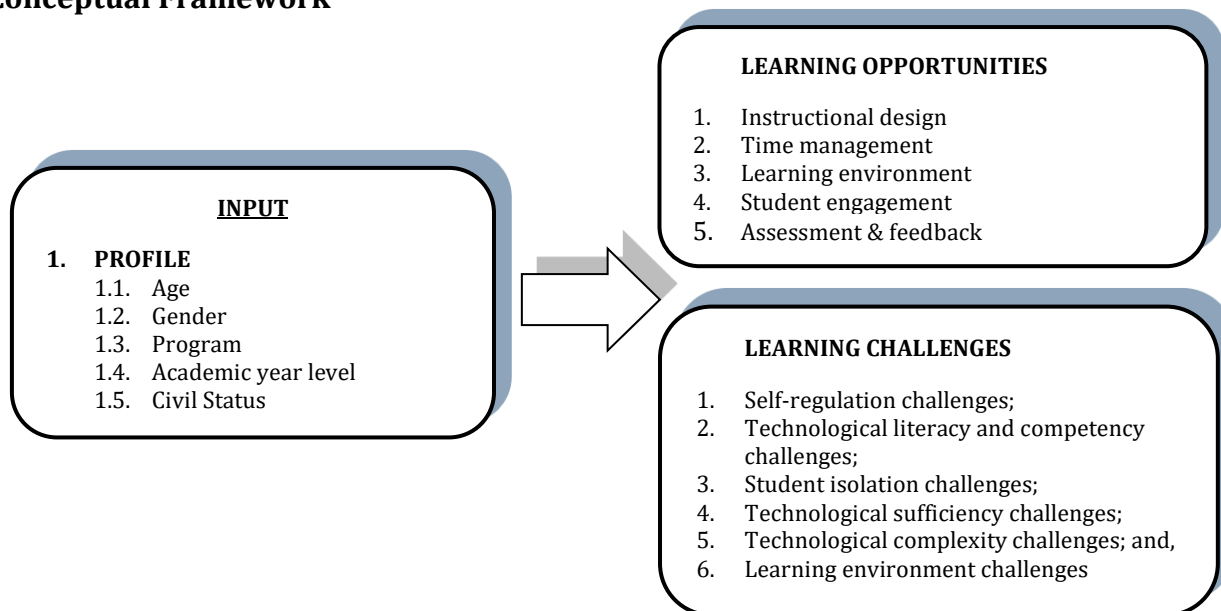


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

As presented in Figure 1, The input presents the profile of the respondents and whether these profile affects the student learning opportunities and challenges during the new normal.

Methods

Research Design. The study employed a descriptive-comparative research design. According to Bertelli (2020), a comparative design normally posed hypotheses about the differences in variables between or among two or more units. Hence, this is utilized to identify and measure differences between two or more variables by analyzing various groups that are being subjected to different treatments either on purpose or due to external factors. Pondering on the above properties, the study will therefore determine if a significant difference exists in the learning opportunities gained and challenges experienced by the respondents during the new normal educational setting when they are grouped according to their profile. The researcher used the following statistical tools in deriving the necessary data of the study:

In arriving at the data for the demographic profile, frequency distribution and percentage was used to present the Age; Gender; Program; Academic year level; and Civil Status of the respondents.

In determining the figures for the learning opportunities gained and challenges experienced by the respondents, a weighted mean was employed. The weighted mean is a statistical technique that determines the average by summing the weights' individual means. It is a kind of averaging in which the relative relevance of each observation is determined by giving weights to individual values. Applying this tool, the observed values will be the statements presented in each factor variable of which assigned number scales will be the basis for computation. The number scales represent the degree of perceived agreement by the respondents towards each statement.

To determine if significant differences exist in the learning opportunities gained and challenges experienced when respondents are grouped according to their profile, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and T-test were used. ANOVA was applied to those profile variables

that have three or more categorical values while the T-test was used for those with two-tailed values.

In as much as the respondents belong to a single academic institution and are likewise undergoing the same new normal set-up of educational delivery, the study employed a combination of purposive and simple random sampling. This can also be used in quantitative research (Bogusz, 2020) while simple random sampling is a sampling strategy that uses an impartial selection process to provide every member of a population an equal chance of being chosen. In application, the proponents determined a representative sample from the 2,176 total student population of AIMS who were enrolled in this 2nd Trimester, AY 2021-2022. Employing Slovin's formula in deriving the representative sample, the study surveyed 337 students who were randomly selected from the total population through the "fishbowl technique."

A survey questionnaire was used as an instrument in gathering data for the study. The instrument has three important parts. The first part determined the profile of the AIMS students in terms of Age, Gender, Program, Academic year level, and Civil Status. The second part identified the learning opportunities gained by the AIMS students under the new normal education. To measure this part, the study adopted the "Synchronous Online Teaching Observation Checklist" created by the City University of New York (2020) in Hunter, New York. The checklist is meant to be used as

an additional tool to direct monitoring of classroom activities where teachers deliver synchronous education to online students. It can also be used in conjunction with a well-known software or a discipline-specific criteria to suggest elements of a successful online, synchronous lecture. The checklist is categorized into five areas of observation: 1) Instructional design; 2) Time management; 3) Learning environment; 4) Student engagement; and, 5) Assessment and feedback. A five-level Likert scale was used to determine the rate of opportunities gained by the AIMS students.

A reliability test was conducted to determine the consistency of the questionnaire. According to Datt and Chetty (2016), assessing a questionnaire's dependability is one technique to judge how well the data collection method was executed. A trustworthy measurement process is required before a result can be regarded as legitimate. The reliability of a construct and the variable that is to be measured is key to the idea behind the questionnaire's validity. When the same subjects and circumstances are utilized, a measurement process that is stable or consistent should yield the same results (or values that are very similar to them. Hence, to comply with this requirement, ten AIMS students were subjected to answer the questionnaire serving as respondents in testing the reliability of the instrument. Based on the computed results, the instrument yielded a 0.956 Cronbach Alpha indicating that the instrument is very reliable.

Results and Discussions

1. Profile of the AIMS students.

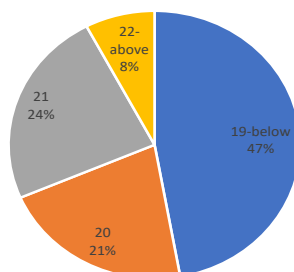


Figure 2. Distribution of Respondents According to Age

Figure 2 represents the percentage distribution of students according to their age. Most of the students are 19 years old and below

(47%), 21 years old (24%), 20 years old (21%), and 22 years old and above (8%).

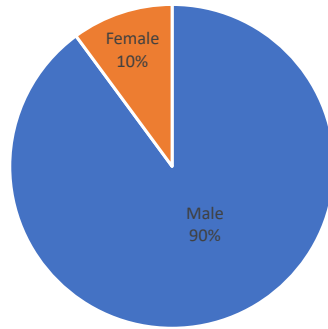


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents according to Gender

Figure 3 presents the percentage distribution of students according to their gender whereas most of the respondents are males (90%) and with (10%) females.

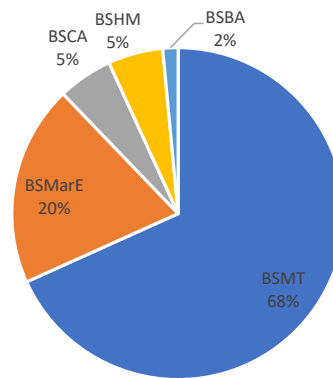


Figure 4. Distribution of Respondents According to Program

Figure 4 shows the percentage distribution of respondents according to the program they enrolled in. Most of the respondents are students from BSMT (68%) and BSMarE (20%). Other students come from BSCA (5%), BSHM (5%) and BSBA (2%).

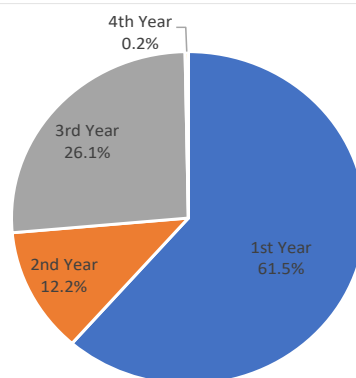


Figure 5. Distribution of Respondents According to Academic Year Level

Figure 5 shows the percentage distribution of respondents according to academic year level. As the figure shows, most of the students are first-year (61.5%), and third-year (26.1%). However, the rest of respondents are second-year (12.2%), and fourth-year (0.2%) respectively.

2. Learning opportunities gained by the AIMS students under the new normal education.*Table 1. Mean Distribution of Learning Opportunities Gained by AIMS Students as to Instructional Design*

| Instructional Design Parameters | Mean | Interpretation |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The class session demonstrates clear signs of planning and organization, and follows a logical flow. | 3.77 | Agree |
| 2. Instructional materials for classes are age-appropriate, easily accessible, and free from errors and broken hyperlinks. | 3.81 | Agree |
| 3. Where relevant, instructional materials include instructions for parental/home implementation and support. | 3.79 | Agree |
| 4. Instructor introduces the learning goals for the class session, which are visible to participants. | 3.95 | Agree |
| 5. Learning and accessibility concerns are addressed in the materials including technical issues - (visuals, infographics, use of text features, graphics, accessible text, enlargement of type, use of audio podcasts or narrated slideshows). | 3.87 | Agree |
| 6. Materials are made available to help students who cannot be online or have a technical difficulty (e.g., a recording of a live class is given after class for viewing; materials for performing offline are made available). | 3.83 | Agree |
| 7. Class sessions provide variety in visual, textual, kinesthetic and/or auditory activities to enhance student learning and accessibility. | 3.87 | Agree |
| 8. Materials used in the session comply with copyright and fair use standards. | 3.88 | Agree |
| 9. If co-taught (with co-teacher or cooperating teacher), evidence of co-planning, shared rules and policies for online delivery are evident in shared time presenting, use of breakout rooms, and task design. | 3.85 | Agree |
| Average Weighted Mean | 3.85 | Agree |

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree); 1.81-2.60 (Disagree); 2.61-3.40 (Neutral); 3.41-4.20 (Agree); 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Table 1 shows the mean distribution of learning opportunities gained by the AIMS students as to instructional design. With an average weighted mean of 3.85, the students agreed that they acquired various learning opportunities provided by AIMS with respect to instructional design. Results of Table 1 suggests that AIMS students agree that instructors introduce the learning goals for the class session having the highest mean of 3.95. This is acceptable as even before pandemic the presentation of learning goals and objectives is already evident and conducted by the instructors as part

of the requirement in teaching delivery. Among the parameters that garnered the lowest mean, the class session demonstrates understandable signs of planning and organization, and follows a logical flow got the lowest mean of 3.77. Although students agree that class session demonstrates straightforward signs of planning and organization and were rated with interpretation "agree" this suggests that even faculty members are really challenged by the pandemic in terms of preparation of instructional design suitable for online learning modality.

Table 2. Mean Distribution of Learning Opportunities Gained by AIMS Students as to Time Management

| Time Management | Mean | Interpretation |
|---|-------------|----------------|
| The class sessions observe schedules promptly; session starts and ends on time. | 3.82 | Agree |
| Instructor leaves time for questions, discussion/and or summarizing the session. | 3.87 | Agree |
| Instructor maximizes in-class time, using active learning or applications. | 3.87 | Agree |
| The class session demonstrates clear signs of planning and organization, and follows a logical flow. | 3.93 | Agree |
| Instructor is able to troubleshoot typical software and hardware problems so as to not lose instructional time. | 3.81 | Agree |
| Instructor has prepared technology relevant to the lesson and gathered needed links before the start of class. | 3.91 | Agree |
| Average Weighted Mean | 3.87 | Agree |

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree); 1.81-2.60 (Disagree); 2.61-3.40 (Neutral); 3.41-4.20 (Agree); 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Table 2 presents the mean distribution of learning opportunities gained by AIMS students as to time management. The majority of the students agreed that time management is essential in the learning opportunities provided by AIMS with an average mean of 3.87. They highly regarded the observance of time limits for all students' activities (M=3.93) and prepared instructional materials and links before the class started (M=3.91). Likewise, students agreed that there should be time for discussion/questions and answers to further understand the lessons (M=3.87) and maximize the in-class time and learning activities and applications (M=3.87).

Table 2 further shows that among the indicators of the learning opportunities as to time management, the indicator, "the class session demonstrates clear signs of planning and organization and follows a logical flow" garnered

the highest mean of 3.93. This is acceptable since in every departmental meeting it is being included in every discussion and faculty member are being reminded to demonstrate and be observant in time usage in terms of delivery. In addition, the management released ACAD 23F-FACULTY ORIENTATION GUIDE for BLENDED-FLEXIBLE MODALITY OF DELIVERY that served as a guide for the faculty members on the institution "Stages of Online Delivery" from creating online classroom up to the end of each session. The indicator "instructor is able to troubleshoot typical software and hardware problems so as to not lose instructional time got the lowest mean of 3.81." This is acceptable as there is a possibility the since the abrupt adaptation of online modality, some instructor is still undergoing training relative to the correct usage of different online platforms as well as trouble shooting.

Table 3. Mean Distribution of Learning Opportunities Gained by the AIMS students as to Learning Environment

| Learning Environment | Mean | Interpretation |
|---|------|----------------|
| Instructor reviews "netiquette" and expectation for engagement and behavior. | 3.88 | Agree |
| Evidence of community building (introductory or getting to know you activities/icebreakers/review or warmers later in semester). | 3.83 | Agree |
| It is evident that instructor is present, proactive, and engaged (if webcam on, is clearly visible and facing camera, keeps an eye on | 3.93 | Agree |

| Learning Environment | Mean | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|-----------------------|
| chat or Q & A, monitors waiting room, turns on/off mute as needed, has disabled distractions). | | |
| Instructor utilizes and controls webcam/audio features to optimize interactions. | 3.90 | Agree |
| Instructor checks for responsiveness (demonstrated through polls, body language, nods, simple checks or emojis, "thumbs up" to signal affirmation). | 3.93 | Agree |
| Instructor provides calming exercises or opportunities to feel similar to his/her school routine (stretches, provides a virtual "rug" area, uses familiar routines, refers to special connections that learners have at school). | 3.85 | Agree |
| Instructor uses names, and makes references to connect learners' interests, family traditions, home languages and cultures, values or special pets, relatives, etc. as part of the learning experience. | 3.91 | Agree |
| Instructor creates opportunities for interaction between students (breakout rooms, use of chat, collab google docs). | 3.94 | Agree |
| Average Weighted Mean | 3.90 | Agree |

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree); 1.81-2.60 (Disagree); 2.61-3.40 (Neutral); 3.41-4.20 (Agree); 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Table 3 presents the mean distribution of learning opportunities gained by AIMS students as to the learning environment. With an average weighted mean of 3.90, most of the students agreed that AIMS provided a learning environment conducive to learning opportunities. A distinguished result is that students learn more when collaborative interaction between students and instructors through chat, breakout rooms and google docs are created having the highest mean of 3.94. Most of the students agreed that they acquired learning opportunities when Instructors are proactive, present, and engaging (M=3.93) and always

check the responsiveness of students for the affirmation of understanding (M=3.93). It can be seen on Table 3 that among the parameters in terms of opportunities as to learning environment, the parameter "evidence of community building (introductory or getting to know you activities/icebreakers/review or warmers later in semester)" got the lowest mean of 3.83. The above findings suggest that although students are agreeing that they've gained learning opportunities as to learning environment there are still gaps that needs to be addressed and be given attention by the management.

Table 4. Mean Distribution of Learning Opportunities Gained by the AIMS students as to Student Engagement

| Student Engagement | Mean | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|-----------------------|
| Instructor uses active-learning exercises in balance with teacher-led presentations. | 3.92 | Agree |
| Instructor builds-in pauses in the lesson to provide opportunities for students to ask questions and promptly responds to questions. | 3.92 | Agree |
| Draws non-participating students into activities/discussion and prevents specific students from dominating activities/discussion. | 3.89 | Agree |
| Addresses potentially disruptive behaviors before they impact learning environment. | 3.98 | Agree |
| Instructor utilizes learning principles and multiple means of engagement through choice projects, interactive games or apps (Voice | 3.96 | Agree |

| Student Engagement | Mean | Interpretation |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|
| thread, Flipgrid or narrated Powerpoints or low-tech engagement tools such as flashcards). | | |
| Instructor utilizes appropriate tools and materials to motivate learners (interactive or competitive games, music, video). | 3.97 | Agree |
| Students engage in active learning tasks that are goal-oriented, focused, project-based and inquiry-oriented. | 4.02 | Agree |
| Instructor monitors and manages active-learning exercises (e.g. computation, essay writing, role playing, etc.). | 3.99 | Agree |
| Before sending students to active learning tasks (group work, paired discussions, polling, team problem-solving, in-class writing), instructor provides explicit modeling and instructions (e.g. rationale, duration, product). | 3.98 | Agree |
| Average Weighted Mean | 3.96 | Agree |

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree); 1.81-2.60 (Disagree); 2.61-3.40 (Neutral); 3.41-4.20 (Agree); 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Table 4 shows the mean distribution of learning opportunities gained by AIMS students with regard to student engagement. With an average weighted mean of 3.96, students agreed that they acquired learning opportunities in AIMS when there is student engagement. They agreed that students should engage in active learning tasks which are goal-oriented, focused, project-based, and inquiry-oriented (M=4.02). Likewise, they mostly agreed that instructors should monitor learning tasks and exercises are done (3.99). Students also agree

that instructional materials and tools should motivate the learners (M=3.97) by utilizing learning engagement through choice projects and apps (M=3.96). Two among the parameters became distinct which includes "instructor uses active-learning exercises in balance with teacher-led presentations" and "instructor builds-in pauses in the lesson to provide opportunities for students to ask questions and promptly responds to questions" both got a lowest mean of 3.92 interpreted as Agree.

Table 5. Mean Distribution of Learning Opportunities Gained by the AIMS students as to Assessment and Feedback

| Assessment and Feedback | Mean | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|-----------------------|
| Instructor provides class generalized constructive and encouraging feedback on how to improve their comprehension or performance in class. | 3.93 | Agree |
| Attends respectfully to student comprehension or puzzlement. Evidence of reinforcement (such as a point chart, a clip-up chart, token economy or certificate, positive points) appropriate to remote or online contexts. | 3.99 | Agree |
| Types of assessments are suitable for distance learning environment and provide immediate feedback. | 3.95 | Agree |
| Instructor assesses students both informally and formally within the online or remote classroom through use of games, quizzes, online tests, etc. | 3.99 | Agree |
| Instructor seeks feedback from students on lesson and on ease of online technology and accessibility of course. | 4.01 | Agree |
| Average Weighted Mean | 3.97 | Agree |

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree); 1.81-2.60 (Disagree); 2.61-3.40 (Neutral); 3.41-4.20 (Agree); 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Table 5 presents the mean distribution of learning opportunities gained by AIMS students as to assessment and feedback. Students agreed that they acquired learning opportunities through assessment and feedback as provided by AIMS with an average weighted mean

of 3.97. Distinct results that students learn from seeking feedback on lessons and ease of technologies (M=4.01), assessing students through the games and quizzes (M=3.99), and attending to comprehension and reinforcement (M=3.99).

3. Challenges experienced of AIMS students as they engage with the online learning environment.

Table 6. Mean Distribution of Learning Challenges Experienced by the AIMS students as to Self-Regulation

| Self-regulation Challenges | Mean | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|----------------|
| I delay tasks related to my studies so that they are either not fully completed by their deadline or had to be rushed to be completed. | 2.87 | Neutral |
| I fail to get appropriate help during online classes. | 2.77 | Neutral |
| I lack the ability to control my own thoughts, emotions, and actions during online classes. | 2.84 | Neutral |
| I have limited preparation before an online class. | 2.93 | Neutral |
| I have poor time management skills during online classes. | 2.83 | Neutral |
| I fail to properly use online peer learning strategies (i.e., learning from one another to better facilitate learning such as peer tutoring, group discussion, and peer feedback). | 2.78 | Neutral |
| Average Weighted Mean | 2.84 | Neutral |

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree); 1.81-2.60 (Disagree); 2.61-3.40 (Neutral); 3.41-4.20 (Agree); 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Table 6 presents the mean distribution of the learning challenges experienced by AIMS students as to self-regulation. Most of the students responded neutral with all the statements, with an average weighted mean of 2.84. It is highly notable that delaying school tasks

(M=2.87), going online unprepared (M=2.93), and lack of focus are the challenges that students have faced during online classes. There is one statement that needs to be immediately addressed as students responded that they failed to get help during online classes (M=2.77).

Table 7. Mean Distribution of Learning Challenges Experienced by the AIMS students as to Technological Literacy and Competency

| Technological literacy and competency challenges | Weighted Mean | Interpretation |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| I lack competence and proficiency in using various interfaces or systems that allow me to control a computer or another embedded control a computer or another embedded system for studying. | 2.66 | Neutral |
| I resist and/or am confused when getting appropriate help during online classes. | 2.66 | Neutral |
| I am distracted by an overly complex technology. | 2.72 | Neutral |
| I resist learning technology. | 2.61 | Neutral |
| I have difficulties in learning a new technology. | 2.62 | Neutral |
| I lack the ability to effectively use technology to facilitate learning. | 2.61 | Neutral |
| I lack knowledge and training in the use of technology. | 2.60 | Disagree |

| Technological literacy and competency challenges | Weighted Mean | Interpretation |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|
| I am intimidated by the technologies used for learning. | 2.59 | Disagree |
| I have poor understanding of directions and expectations during online learning. | 2.63 | Neutral |
| I perceive technology as a barrier to getting help from others during online classes. | 2.65 | Neutral |
| Average Weighted Mean | 2.63 | Neutral |

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree); 1.81-2.60 (Disagree); 2.61-3.40 (Neutral); 3.41-4.20 (Agree); 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Table 7 shows the mean distribution of learning challenges experienced by AIMS students in technological literacy and competency. With an average weighted mean of 2.63, most of the students were neutral about the challenges that they have experienced in during online classes regarding technical literacy and competency. Resistance to learning the technology (M=2.61), and effectively facilitate it (M=2.61) both got the lowest mean interpreted as neutral. In this variable, the parameter that

got the highest mean is the student is distracted by an overly complex technology. Two distinctive parameters immersed on the results which include "students disagree that they have been given training in the use of the new technology (M=2.60) and their confidence in using it (M=2.59). The table suggests that students do have enough training in the use of technology and that they are knowledgeable and confident in using it and they are not considering it as a learning challenge.

Table 8. Mean Distribution of Learning Challenges Experienced by the AIMS students as to Student Isolation

| Student Isolation Challenges | Weighted Mean | Interpretation |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|
| I feel emotionally disconnected or isolated during online classes. | 2.78 | Neutral |
| I feel disinterested during online class. | 2.69 | Neutral |
| I feel unease and uncomfortable in using video projection, microphones, and speakers. | 2.72 | Neutral |
| I feel uncomfortable being the center of attention during online classes. | 2.85 | Neutral |
| Average Weighted Mean | 2.76 | Neutral |

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree); 1.81-2.60 (Disagree); 2.61-3.40 (Neutral); 3.41-4.20 (Agree); 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Table 8 presents the mean distribution of learning challenges experienced by AIMS students as to student isolation. With an average weighted mean of 2.76, most of the students were neutral about the challenges they have experienced in AIMS during online classes that affect their learning opportunities. Students were neutral that they feel uncomfortable being the

center of attention during online classes with a highest mean of 2.85, while parameter that student feel disinterested during the online classes got the lowest mean of 2.69. The table suggest that as to student isolation challenges, there are students felt uncomfortable being the center of attention.

Table 9. Mean Distribution of Learning Challenges Experienced by the AIMS students as to Technological Sufficiency

| Technological Sufficiency Challenges | Mean | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|----------------|
| I have an insufficient access to learning technology. I experience technical difficulties in completing my assignments. | 2.90 | Neutral |
| I experience inequalities with regard to access to and use of technologies during online classes because of my socioeconomic, physical, and psychological condition. | 2.76 | Neutral |
| I have an outdated technology. | 2.78 | Neutral |
| I do not have Internet access during online classes. | 2.54 | Disagree |
| I have low bandwidth and slow processing speeds. | 2.84 | Neutral |
| Average Weighted Mean | 2.76 | Neutral |

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree); 1.81-2.60 (Disagree); 2.61-3.40 (Neutral); 3.41-4.20 (Agree); 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Table 9 presents the mean distribution of learning challenges experienced by AIMS students as to technical sufficiency. With an average weighted mean of 2.76, students were neutral that they have experienced learning challenges with regard to technological sufficiency in AIMS during online classes. Most of the students were neutral that they have experienced learning challenges with regard to technological sufficiency in AIMS with an average weighted mean of 2.76. Among the parameters of Technological Sufficiency Challenges,

students were neutral that they have an insufficient access to learning technology and they have experience technical difficulties in completing their assignments with the highest mean of 2.90. This can be acceptable because students cannot really access their laboratories during the time of pandemic. Table 9 also shown that students were disagreeing that they do not have internet access during online classes and it can be concluded that AIMS students have internet access capability.

Table 10. Mean Distribution of Learning Challenges Experienced by the AIMS students as to Technological Complexity

| Technological Complexity Challenges | Mean | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|----------------|
| I am distracted by the complexity of the technology during online classes. | 2.71 | Neutral |
| I experience difficulties in using complex technology. | 2.70 | Neutral |
| I experience difficulties when using longer videos for learning. | 2.80 | Neutral |
| Average Weighted Mean | 2.74 | Neutral |

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree); 1.81-2.60 (Disagree); 2.61-3.40 (Neutral); 3.41-4.20 (Agree); 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Table 10 shows the mean distribution of learning challenges experienced by AIMS students as to technological complexity. With an average weighted mean of 2.74, students were neutral that AIMS addressed the learning challenges experienced by students with regard to

technological complexity. They find themselves distracted by the complexity of technology during online classes (M=2.71) like difficulty in using it (M=2.70), and when the video is too long to watch (M=2.80).

Table 11. Mean Distribution of Learning Challenges Experienced by the AIMS students as to Learning Environment

| Learning Environment Challenges | Mean | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|----------------|
| I have an insufficient access to library resources. | 2.94 | Neutral |
| I have an insufficient access to laboratory equipment and materials. | 2.93 | Neutral |
| I have limited access to textbooks, worksheets, and other instructional materials. | 2.91 | Neutral |
| I experience financial challenges when accessing learning resources and technology. | 3.04 | Neutral |
| I experience online distractions such as social media during online classes. | 3.00 | Neutral |
| I experience distractions at home as a learning environment. | 3.11 | Neutral |
| I have difficulties in selecting the best time and area for learning at home. | 2.98 | Neutral |
| Home set-up limits the completion of certain requirements for my subject (e.g., laboratory and physical activities). | 3.10 | Neutral |
| Average Weighted Mean | 3.00 | Neutral |

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree); 1.81-2.60 (Disagree); 2.61-3.40 (Neutral); 3.41-4.20 (Agree); 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Table 11 presents the mean distribution of challenges experienced by AIMS students as to the learning environment. Most of the students were neutral on all the parameters with an average weighted mean of 3.0 that they have experienced learning challenges with regard to the new learning environment. They cited distractions at home as the highest challenge they've encountered during the new normal with a mean of 3.11, followed by home set up limits in selecting the best time and area at home for learning set-up with a mean of 3.10.

The results are acceptable as we can consider that due to abrupt changes on learning modality and abrupt implementation of lockdown, students and their family were not prepared to online learning setting. In most cases home environment is not conducive to learning, as students need to attend to some house chores and errands during online classes. Among the parameters as to the Learning Environment students were neutral and gave lowest mean to the parameters that they have limited access to textbooks, worksheets and others.

4. Comparison of learning opportunities gained and challenges experienced when respondents are grouped according to their profile.

Table 12. Difference in the Learning Opportunities and Challenges when the Respondents are Grouped according to Gender (T-test Results)

| Variable | Gender | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-value | p-value | Interpretation |
|------------------------|--------|------|--------------------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| Learning Opportunities | Male | 3.95 | 0.84 | 2.299 | 0.022 | Significant |
| | Female | 3.59 | 1.03 | | | |
| Learning Challenges | Male | 2.78 | 0.99 | -0.242 | 0.809 | Not Significant |
| | Female | 2.83 | 0.80 | | | |

Table 12 above presents the results of the analysis on the difference between male and female students as to learning opportunities gained and learning challenges experienced during the new normal education. It can be seen from the table that as to learning opportunities, male students have a mean of 3.95 with

standard deviation of 0.84, while female students have a mean of 3.59 with standard deviation of 1.03. The computed t-value for the mean difference is 2.299 with p-value of 0.022 which suggests that the learning opportunities are significantly different between male and female students. In addition, this result implies

that male students tend to have significantly higher agreement on the identified learning opportunities than females.

As to learning challenges experienced, males and females were found to be the same, as shown by the t-value of -0.242 with a p-value of 0.809.

Table 13. Difference in the Learning Opportunities and Challenges when the Respondents are Grouped according to Age (ANOVA Results)

| Variable | Age | Mean | Standard Deviation | F-ratio | p-value | Interpretation |
|------------------------|----------|------|--------------------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| Learning Opportunities | 19-below | 3.96 | 0.82 | 0.377 | 0.770 | Not Significant |
| | 20 | 3.89 | 0.88 | | | |
| | 21 | 3.84 | 0.96 | | | |
| Learning Challenges | 22-above | 3.86 | 0.83 | 0.641 | 0.589 | Not Significant |
| | 19-below | 2.74 | 0.96 | | | |
| | 20 | 2.93 | 1.09 | | | |
| | 21 | 2.77 | 0.96 | | | |
| | 22-above | 2.77 | 0.81 | | | |

As to learning opportunities, students have the same level of agreement regardless of age, as reflected by the computed F-ratio of 0.377 with a p-value of 0.770 (not significant).

Likewise, AIMS students experienced the same learning challenges across ages, as manifested by the computed F-ratio of 0.641 with a p-value of 0.589 (not significant).

Table 14. Difference in the Learning Opportunities and Challenges when the Respondents are Grouped according to Program

| Variable | Program | Mean | Standard Deviation | F-ratio | p-value | Interpretation |
|------------------------|---------|------|--------------------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| Learning Opportunities | BSMT | 3.89 | 0.83 | 5.104 | 0.001 | Significant |
| | BSMarE | 4.21 | 0.80 | | | |
| | BSCA | 3.24 | 1.22 | | | |
| | BSHM | 3.79 | 0.86 | | | |
| | BSBA | 3.63 | 0.62 | | | |
| Learning Challenges | BSMT | 2.79 | 0.99 | 2.170 | 0.072 | Not Significant |
| | BSMarE | 2.71 | 0.97 | | | |
| | BSCA | 2.55 | 1.01 | | | |
| | BSHM | 3.39 | 0.65 | | | |
| | BSBA | 2.54 | 0.27 | | | |

Table 15. Multiple Comparisons Test (Scheffe' Test)

| Programs | Mean Difference | p-value | Interpretation |
|----------------|-----------------|---------|----------------|
| BSMT vs BSCA | 0.647 | 0.047 | Significant |
| BSMARE vs BSCA | 0.966 | 0.001 | Significant |

Table 14 above presents the results of the analysis on the differences in learning opportunities gained and learning challenges experienced by the students when grouped according to program. As shown, the learning opportunities gained by the respondents are significantly different when they are grouped according to

the program, as reflected by the computed F-ratio of 5.104 with a p-value of 0.001. Based on Scheffe's multiple comparisons test (Table 15), it was found that BSMT students have a significantly higher agreement than BSCA (mean difference=0.647, p-value=0.047). Also, BSMARE

students have a significantly higher agreement than BSCA students (mean difference=0.966, p-value=0.001).

As to learning challenges, the students experienced the same level, regardless of the program (F-ratio=2.170, p-value=0.072).

Table 16. Difference in the Learning Opportunities and Challenges when the Respondents are Grouped according to Academic Year Level

| Variable | Year Level | Mean | Standard Deviation | F-ratio | p-value | Interpretation |
|------------------------|------------|------|--------------------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| Learning Opportunities | 1st Year | 3.91 | 0.82 | 0.010 | 0.999 | Not Significant |
| | 2nd Year | 3.89 | 1.01 | | | |
| | 3rd Year | 3.91 | 0.91 | | | |
| | 4th Year | 4.01 | 0.00 | | | |
| Learning Challenges | 1st Year | 2.80 | 1.00 | 0.595 | 0.619 | Not Significant |
| | 2nd Year | 2.61 | 1.03 | | | |
| | 3rd Year | 2.84 | 0.90 | | | |
| | 4th Year | 2.45 | 0.00 | | | |

In terms of learning opportunities, the students were found to have gained the same level, regardless of academic grade level (F-ratio=0.010, p-value=0.999). As to learning challenges, the students experienced the same level, regardless of academic grade level (F-ratio=0.595, p-value=619).

This study mainly aimed to assess the opportunities and challenges of AIMS students' learning in the new normal as the students were introduced to the new method of learning and instruction. The above findings suggest that although students are agreeing that they have gained learning opportunities, there are still gaps that needs to address and should give attention by the management. There are also gaps that management needs to focus on to show its commitment in providing goods services and delivery to its students. The results of this study can be used to infer a number of conclusions. First, this study emphasized the significance of higher education institutions' emergency response capacity and preparation in case a new crisis arises. National and institutional policies, procedure and guidelines, technology resources and infrastructure, instruction delivery, staff development, potential disparities, and collaboration between key stakeholders are just a few of the crucial areas that require the highest attention (i.e., parents, students, teachers, school leaders, industry, government education agencies, and community). Second, the findings have deepened our

comprehension of the various difficulties that AIMS students have experienced when the institution abruptly switch to fully online learning. The results of this study could be used by Higher Educational Institutions with similar learning environments to build and improve their own learning continuity strategies, thereby reducing the negative effects of the pandemic/risks. These are important facts that are required for effective policymaking, decision-making, and future online learning implementation. Thirdly, teachers can discover the findings helpful in formulating appropriate interventions to address the observed issues, particularly in the most crucial areas. The findings also gave us a multifaceted knowledge of the "hows" and "whys" of a successful transition to fully online learning by illuminating the interdependence of learning tools, learners, and learning outcomes within an online learning environment.

In addition, for AIMS, given the findings and interpretations, the hypothesis of the study that there is no significant difference in the learning opportunities gained and challenges experienced by the respondents when grouped according to their profile can be proved to be accurate. AIMS provided quality learning opportunities for the students and the learning challenges were bearable for the study. Learning environment challenges gained the highest mean and can be concluded as the most challenging experience for AIMS Students.

Recommendations

It is recommended to maintain and continue the good practices in providing quality learning opportunities for the students in the new normal set-up. This include providing training for the students in terms of usage of platform. This can be considered as one best practice of the institutions as it was considered and garnered a lowest mean among the parameters. However, since there was a significant difference in the BSMT vs BSCA and BSMarE vs BSCA, there should be more specialized learning activities per learning program that will accurately fit their chosen course or program. In terms of gender-related activities, there should be learning opportunities that are gender-sensitive for them to get more acquainted with the learning.

It is recommended that continuous training must be provided to the faculty members in terms of classroom planning and organization. Review of the submitted materials of the faculty members must continuously conducted. Online classroom observation by the person in charged must be done timely and be considered with high importance to immediately improve the classroom planning and organization. Intensive training regarding simple trouble shooting must also be given to faculty members.

Though all of the challenge indicators gained neutral response, nonetheless, the following are worth recommending. Learning environment challenges got the highest average weighted mean among the challenges of AIMS Students. Students experience distractions at home. It is recommended that since students experienced distractions at home, faculty members must know how to become compassionate enough to understand the students as they are going through abrupt adjustments from traditional to new online setting by giving enough time/extension to deadlines and assignments. Home set up limits the completion of certain requirement for the student's course (laboratory and physical activities) got the second highest mean. It is therefore recommended that the management should look for ways and give proper announcement to students by giving orientation relative to addressing student concerns in laboratories and other activities that

needs to be conducted physically inside the institutions. Involvement of parents in the orientation must be considered and should be look into consideration as well. In addition, faculty members should also take into consideration using other evidence of community building materials like icebreakers and games in order for them to get the students more engaged and participative in online classrooms discussions.

For the encountered challenges of the students in terms of self-regulation, students moderately agree that they fail to get appropriate help during the online classes thus it is recommended to have additional review or survey to know those students who need additional help and training for online classes.

For learning challenges experienced by AIMS students pertaining to technological literacy and competency, considering the result shows that students are distracted by the use of complex technology thus it is recommended to continue the conduct of training and giving support for student usage of the institution platform.

For learning challenges experienced by AIMS student as to student isolation in which results shows a higher weighted mean of 2.80 for students who experience difficulties when using longer videos for learning thus it is recommended for the faculty members to review the video presentation shared with the students to shorten and consider the technological capacity of the gadget used by the learners.

Future research needs to recognize and overcome some of the study's limitations. This study's drawback is that it only considered student perspectives. All additional players involved in the teaching-learning process could be included in future studies to increase the sample size. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issue and how various factors interact with one another or affect one another, researchers may go further by examining teachers' perspectives and experiences. Future research may potentially reveal certain teacher-related variables that may affect how well AIMS students learn online.

As a final note the author agree to the AIMS President statement that "The extreme challenges presented by the pandemic has reshaped the ecosystem of education and

forcefully brought innovations in its delivery systems. AIMS has shifted and adopted learning or flexible modalities of teaching to accommodate different situations of AIMS students" (Paderanga, 2020). The pandemic has clearly changed the educational landscape and stretched it to its breaking point, strengthening the educational system and enable it to withstand attacks or risks in the future.

Acknowledgement

In every step, the researcher asked guidance from our Almighty Father. All the wisdom, strength, courage, and determination came from Him; thus, it is rightful that all thanksgiving, honor, and praise must be offered first to Him.

The researcher wants to express her appreciation and sincerest gratitude to the following persons who assisted and helped in the realization of this study. For their support, strong guidance, motivation, encouragement, and valuable insights for the improvement of the study and in writing the manuscript from start to completion.

Mr. Jamer Yapchulay, former AIMS BA faculty member, whom at the onset should be a co-author of the paper by giving his reference materials as part of this study.

Mr. Ricardo Banigon, the research Statistician, for his assistance in the research results and interpretation.

Dr. Victor Cajala, Dean of the Center for Research and Institutional Development (CRID); Ms. Charity Manuel; and, Ms. Maria Celia Cabasal who guided the researcher in writing the paper and for all the suggestions and recommendations that helped improved this study.

Ms. Katrina Rivera, former CRID Secretary, for her assistance in the preparation of the questionnaire in Google forms.

All the students from AIMS School of Merchant Marine and School of Maritime Business for giving their time and accommodating the request for participation to answer the survey; and, for their trust and willingness in answering the research instrument that helped the researcher came up with good results.

To my family, my husband and two children – for being my inspiration to complete this paper; for your understanding and

encouragement; and for believing in my ability to overcome struggles and trials to finish this study.

Rhugin V. Giner

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