Research Article

Understanding the Anxiety-Related Experiences of College Students in Online Synchronous Classes Using Video-conferencing Platforms

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ABSTRACT

The pandemic caused by the spread of Coronavirus had brought significant changes to academic institutions. One notable change is the reliance to technology in conducting online synchronous class in the form of video-conferencing. The changes brought about by the pandemic have been accompanied by a rise in different psychological issues such as anxiety. Given that most studies conducted in the Philippines focus on the effects of COVID-19 on college students' learning processes and mental health, further exploration is needed to better understand students' experiences with video conferencing platforms in online synchronous classes. To achieve the purpose of the study, phenomenological approach and applied interpretative phenomenological analysis were utilized. The findings revealed four main themes: on the use of technology, intrapersonal awareness of anxiety, interpersonal awareness of anxiety, and on coping with anxiety. These findings are valuable for academic institutions in developing policies to manage students' anxiety related to videoconferencing. Academic institutions are encouraged to go beyond focusing solely on the academic outcomes of the students and revisit traditional frameworks and integrate mental health considerations. Development and validation of psychometric instruments to accurately measure video-conferencing-related anxiety is recommended. Conducting meta-analyses of existing research can help identify patterns and underlying factors influencing student anxiety in virtual learning environments.

Keywords: Video-conferencing, Anxiety, Online Synchronous Classes

Introduction

The pandemic caused by the spread of Coronavirus in 2019 had brought unprecedented changes and adjustments in the field of academic learning. One of the changes includes the use of technology, specifically video-conferencing platforms used as means of communication between students and their teachers. The changes brought about by the pandemic have been accompanied by a rise in different psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, stress, insomnia, and negative outcomes.

Anxiety is typically known as intense worrying and fear of what is to come (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). As stated by Stumph (2020), anxiety consistently tops the list of mental disorders suffered by college students, followed closely by depressive states. A study conducted by Penn State found that college students reported having anxiety as a major health concern affecting approximately 60 percent of the students. Moreover, previous studies have reported a higher prevalence and higher levels of anxiety among college students amidst pandemic (Jia et al., 2003; Chen et al., 2004; Li et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2015, as cited in Wang et al, 2020).

According to Moshood (2021), mental health experts said that COVID fuelled a surge in cases of anxiety and depressive tendencies including other mental health issues. Another study was conducted by Cao et al. (as mentioned in Wang et. al, 2020) wherein the researchers concluded that 24.9% of the students were said to experience anxiety during the COVID-19 outbreak whereas; 0.9% have severe anxiety and 21.3%, mild anxiety. A study conducted by Ahmed, Faisal, Jobe, & Sharker (2021) on the mental health status of university students in Bangladesh with regard to their anxiety and depression levels during the pandemic; results reflected that the majority of the university students scored highly for anxiety and depression symptoms. These findings also supported the notion that college students belong in the vulnerable population for the psychological impacts of the pandemic (Khan et al.,2020 as cited in Ahmed, et.al, 2020).

Different psychological pressures caused college students to be vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic (Cao et al., 2020; as cited in Wang et al, 2020). Son et. al. (2020) also reported these negative impacts of the pandemic to the students of the higher education. The vulnerability of young adults, particularly college students were also reflected in the study of Singh et al., (2020) as cited in Ballad & Labrague (2020). It was found out that adverse mental and psychological health consequences of quarantine or lockdown measures posed a potential threat to their physical, emotional, and mental health as well as their developmental and educational progress.

Given, that the students were found to belong in the vulnerable group and are prone to anxiety-related issues, a phenomenological study is warranted focusing on the anxiety-related experiences of the students while engaged in synchronous classes. The phenomenological approach is used in exploring individual's perceptions and interpretation. The ability to access and comprehend experiences is fundamental to phenomenology, creating a strong foundation for explaining of individual perspective. (Wounds UK, 2016). Using this approach, the experiences of the students can be understood leading to the identification of possible measures that can help students in managing anxiety related to online synchronous classes.

Online synchronous classes allow instructors to have real-time engagement to the students despite being geographically separated Martin et. al (2021). In a study conducted by Majewska and Zvobgo (2023), university students expressed several benefits of synchronous classes that include convenience and its effectiveness as a substitute for face-to-face classes. A descriptive qualitative study conducted by Famuralsih (2020) yielded the findings that most students considered the synchronous classes applications such as video platforms effective and efficient. Video-conferencing platforms include flexible features that allow users, especially students to navigate, manage and accomplish their academic tasks and connect with their peers and teachers during their classes. However, not all experiences were positive.

A major drawback to synchronous classes was the inadequate opportunity for human interaction which was perceived to be important

for establishing their peer support and developing in-depth group discussion on subject matter. While some students develop optimism and adaptability through videoconferencing, others felt unmotivated and disengaged from learning (Reduca and Ucang, 2023). Moreover, a qualitative study by Massner (2022) revealed that videoconferencing fatigue had affected students causing them to have reduced energy in fulfilling academic tasks and in diminished learning absorption. Martha et. al (2024) also revealed that students experienced physical symptoms such as fatigue, eye strain and back discomfort due to prolonged used of videoconferencing. In terms of mental health, students also reported heightened stress and anxiety while engaged in videoconferencing.

Furthermore, the emergence of anxiety related experiences has caused negative repercussions on the students who are engaging in online distance learning or online classes. As mentioned in the interview surveys by Son et al., (2020), multiple stressors were identified as contributors which affect the increase of levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive thoughts among students. By understanding students' lived experiences with synchronous classes, this study aims to study the phenomenon contributing to anxiety in online synchronous classes. The findings will help inform educational institutions, policymakers, and researchers in developing support systems that enhance student well-being and engagement in virtual learning environments.

Philosophical Underpinning

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative approach to psychological research that focuses on how an individual views a phenomenon from a particular perspective. It is focused not at the descriptive level but at the level of interpretation that the natural views of a participant are understood (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). It is idiographic in its approach and it aims to analyze the understanding of meaning and consciousness of an individual by means of understanding what constitutes meaning in the subjective consciousness of the individual participant. In contrast to the usual inductive and objective analysis of science, phenomenology begins with the experience of the person and eventually develops this in spontaneous form (Hitzler & Eberle, 2004).

Luk (2021) emphasized the importance of expanding the understanding with the anxiety-related experiences of the students within the context of synchronous classes on the use of video-conferencing platforms. Since most of the studies conducted in the Philippines focus on the effect of COVID-19 in the learning process of college students and on their mental health, exploration to better understand the experiences of students using video-conferencing platforms in synchronous classes is warranted. The current study aims to understand the anxiety-related experiences of students while navigating video conferencing platforms inside the virtual classroom.

Methods Research Design

The present study is Phenomenological (Montague, 2016; Flick, 2014; Willig, 2013, Groenewald, 2004; & Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999) in approach and applied Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), an idiographic qualitative research design. To achieve the purpose of phenomenological research, the researchers explored the meaning of the essence of experiences as shared by the research participants (Flick, 2014; Willig, 2013). Rooted in the philosophical perspective and discussions by Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 – 1961), phenomenological research entails studying a small number of participants through extensive and prolonged engagement that would develop relationships of meaning (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). This methodological choice is justified because IPA is particularly suited for examining how individuals make sense of their personal experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2015), aligning with the study's aim of understanding students' subjective perceptions and emotional responses during synchronous classes.

Participants and Setting

The participants of the study were composed of three college students with each student studying a different course from three different college and universities within Luzon, Philippines. According to Smith and Fieldsend

(2021), three (3) is an exceptionally acceptable sample size for an IPA study. A sample size of three participants is sufficient for an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study, as the methodology prioritizes depth of analysis over generalizability (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Previous research supports that small samples can yield rich, meaningful insights in phenomenological inquiry. The participants were selected through purposive typical case sampling, which is a type of non-probability sampling design where individuals can be classified as "typical" for a group or phenomenon, and purposive sampling design in general, which focuses on people with specific qualities. When examining large communities or complex questions, typical case samples are frequently used (Nikolopoulou, 2022).

Before data collection, participants provided written informed consent after being informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the option to withdraw at any time. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used, and all data were securely stored. Identifiable details were excluded to protect participants' privacy, following ethical research guidelines.

Instrument

The instruments that we used for the study included a screening instrument to identify if the participants are experiencing anxiety, GAD-7, which is a seven-item instrument that is used to measure or assess the severity of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD). Each item asks the individual to rate the severity of their symptoms over the past two weeks. The GAD-7 score is calculated by assigning scores of 0, 1, 2, and 3, to the response categories of "not at all," "several days," "more than half the days," and "nearly every day," respectively, and then adding together the scores for the seven questions. GAD-7 total score for the seven items ranges from 0 to 21. Scores of 5, 10, and 15 represent cut-points for mild, moderate, and severe anxiety, respectively. When used as a screening tool, further evaluation is recommended when the score is 10 or greater (Generalised Anxiety Disorder Assessment (GAD-7), n.d.). According to Johnson, S. U., Ulvenes, P. G., Øktedalen, T., and Hoffart, A. (2019), the GAD-7

demonstrated good internal consistency and convergent validity with alphas all above 0.82 at intake and post-treatment, and correlations were large with other measures of anxiety and well-being, indicating high reliability and validity. The GAD-7 was used to screen participants for anxiety, ensuring that they had relevant lived experiences for the study. By assessing anxiety severity, the study ensured meaningful insights into the phenomenon, aligning with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which prioritizes depth and detailed exploration of personal experiences.

After administering the screener, the participants were screened for anxiety and were requested for a scheduled online interview using video conference platform Microsoft® Teams, before which, consent from the participants for the recording of the interview was obtained. Filipino semi-structured interview guide was used which were based from the research questions. The researchers utilized pen and paper for note taking, Microsoft® Word for transcribing the audio recordings of the interviews, and Microsoft® Excel which was used to code, label, analyze, and organize the Master and Constituent themes that were extracted from the data based on each individual interview transcription of the participants.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process for the study was based on the detailed process of doing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Flick, 2014; Willig, 2013, Groenewald, 2004; and Smith, Jarman & Osborn 1999). Interview process with the participants was conducted with proper audio recordings. Transcription was carried out using Microsoft® Word. Identifying information was removed from the transcriptions, and the participants' real names were replaced with identification codes. After the manual transcription of the interview, familiarization with the transcriptions was done which allowed researchers to gain impressions on the individual situation of each participant which were noted in the Reflexivity Journal. Using the extracted statements from each of the participants, initial coding of the data was done. After the initial coding, the researchers reviewed all the codes generated to look for common

concepts that would unify the initial themes. After identifying the concepts, the initial themes were organized together and combined according to the similarity of concepts, afterwards, the unifying concepts were identified. The next step was to re-analyze and integrate all the individual transcriptions together to form the Master Themes and Constituent themes generated for the entire study and the findings were organized on a summary table. For validity, member checking was done throughout the data analysis and reflexivity.

Findings

The participants vividly described their experiences of anxiety during synchronous classes on the use of video-conferencing platforms. Interpretative phenomenological analysis revealed four main themes: on the use of technology, intrapersonal awareness of anxiety, interpersonal awareness of anxiety, and on coping with anxiety. Table 1 shows the summary of the themes of the study brought about by the analysis. Master themes were identified together with accompanying constituent themes of the study. The researchers understand that the use of video conferencing platforms produced feelings of anxiety that were also accompanied with different emotions, struggles with self-confidence, worries, perceived social evaluation, difficulty with focus among others. But at the same time, the participants also utilized coping strategies that helped them manage their anxiety while navigating these platforms and that they developed a sense of responsibility.

Anxiety-Related Experiences of College Students During Synchronous Classes on The Use of Video-Conferencing Platforms	Master Theme	Constituent Theme
1. On the Use of Technology	Distinguishing virtual from real life: significant challenges in the use of technology	Anxiety with technology Use of Video Platform: uncertainties and worries Struggle with distractions
2. Intrapersonal Awareness of Anxiety	Challenges encountered with roles Comfort and challenge: blurred boundaries on being a student	Struggle with self-confidence Blurring of boundaries
3. Interpersonal Awareness of Anxiety	Fear of committing mistakes Perceived experiences of social evaluation	Anxiety and worry about classmates' reactions behind screen Perceived shared struggles with classmates
4. On Coping with Anxiety	Memory: anxiety and technology intertwined	Difficulty with focus Use of coping strategies This works for me: awareness of effectiveness of coping strategies Having sense of responsibility: setting of priorities

Theme 1: On the Use of Technology

The first theme of the study is on the use of technology. The participants shared that aside from their anxiety, the use of technology is also affecting their academic experience, specifically on the use of their class video-conferencing platform. P1 has anxieties when it comes to how she might be perceived by her classmates online, and in addition to this, is worried that she might accidentally hit the unmute button during class and everyone might hear background noises. She shared that this is the first thing that makes her anxious in the use of the video-conference platform:

P1: Ah, tuwing nagkaklase po kami, nagkaka-synchronous classes, ang pinakaunang nagdadala po sa'kin ng anxiety tuwing

nag- ah, like during the class po is 'yung accidentally na-hit ko po ung unmute mic.

On the other hand, P2 feels that with the use of the video-conferencing platform, her anxiety is somehow manageable whenever she can find an excuse when it comes to class activities, specifically with 'poor' internet connection. This implies that there is a degree of control by participants regarding how they are using the video-conferencing platforms, unlike in face-to-face classes, there are admittedly lesser excuses with internet connection problems, but with another context already:

P3: uhm, when it comes po to ano po, since let's say kung may in- uhm something kastuy na uhh ano Q and A parang mas uhh less po yung- I'm not saying na totally walang anxiety ganon po pero parang mas less po ko na magkaroon ng anxiety, parang as of now ngay- uhm this uhh online platform kasi po I can make excuses like "ma'am sorry I didn't catch up, medyo may ano po yung internet ko" while in uhm face-to-face wala kang makikitang rason kundi uhh yung talagang main reason lang is yung hindi ka nakapag review, or yung hindi ka ready sa mga ganitong situation like yun nga yung on the spot ganon so- pero ganon nga kapag yung nga ODL, "ma'am hindi po kita narinig" ganon ganon po [giggles].

Theme 2: Intrapersonal Awareness of Anxiety

When it comes to the second theme, it was analyzed that the participants have an awareness of their intrapersonal anxiety, so in addition to the use of technology, the participants significantly shared their intrapersonal awareness by describing how they find it difficult at times to distinguish the boundaries of being a student and having another role or in an environment that is not what they had been used to, like having class at home. P1 shared that there are times that due to the environment, the pacing is quite different from the usual classroom environment that she experienced before, which is also affecting her focus. She also added that the uncertain nature of the environment is at times making her feel uneasy, wondering if what she is doing is still correct. P1 had also exhibited a keen sense of intrapersonal

awareness due to her identifying what she was feeling with these experiences:

P1: mahirap pong i-distinguish, 'yung comfort and 'yung dapat po ah, focus sa klase dahil nga po nasa bahay.

The blurring of boundaries is also related with the encounters with difficulties with focus as P1 related these to the seamless transition or combination of being a student and a family member both at the same time.

Theme 3: Interpersonal Awareness of Anxiety

All of the participants also shared that they are conscious of how others, specifically their peers (including their teachers) will perceive or see them online, illustrated by the third theme of the study which is on the interpersonal awareness of anxiety. The uncertain nature of video-conferencing platforms, despite their advanced settings in user navigation or user experience, still contributes to the anxiety of the participants. They struggle with the thought of how they may project themselves online, how they will appear to their classmates, which results in having lesser engagement during class. They would sometimes defer from participating or perform recitations even using the audio, because of this perception that they will be judged by their peers or teachers in a negative way. The following statements were shared by each of the participants:

P1: ...another thing that brings me anxiety po during, the-, during class is kapag gusto ko po sumagot voluntarily but, hindi ko magawa, kase kahit walang nakatingin sa'kin na alam ko na, na naririnig ako ng lahat at hindi ko alam kung ano 'yung pwede nilang maisip dahil hindi ko naman nakikita kung ano 'yung reaction nila tungkol dun sa sagot ko.

P2: I have to really get ready for it like, when before it starts, i-i'm kind of, like, on waiting mode, like I have to really prepare myself, mentally, prepare myself and fix everything about my posture. make sure. and I have to adjust the lighting and the set of just to make sure that I look fine and I can at least have the confidence to show myself and not embarrass myself and during it. I always look at myself to see if I look fine or if people are looking at me. Hon-

estly, it's so hard to... to know if people are looking at you because you don't really have it's online.

P3: uhm parang I'm not used na uhm magrecite na hawak ko ang phone or kase uhm nung nagrerecite ako, I have to- you know uhm parang naka open cam ehh ayoko ng ganon. Yung feeling ko naka-mata sila saakin pero kapag kasi- and compared to classroom, kahit na nakatingin sila saakin I'm- ay, naka focus po 'ko sa teacher pero nung may ODL na po nakikita ko po kasi yung mga classmates ko and sometimes parang tumatawa sila. I know na some of them is not laughing at me, maybe they are laughing yung mga nasa background nila-pero it feels like baka ako yung tinatatawanan nila, ganon [giggles]

Themes 4: On Coping with Anxiety

The fourth theme generated in the study is on how the participants cope with their experiences of anxiety. They utilize various coping strategies such as self-control, relaxation and breathing exercises. P3 reported having symptoms of anxiety. After she was transferred to another section, her anxiety worsened because she had a different set of classmates this time, and is having difficulty adjusting and relating to her new classmates. She is having difficulty with internet connection, and she is reasoning out to her teachers and classmates of the connection problems, which worsens her anxiety.

P3: Uhm ano, brip- be prepared lang po ganon and make yourself and- I mean control uhm control yourself and then yung ngay you practice uhh being calm in the midst of yun nga po kapag nag papanic, try breathing exercise ganon po because I've shared my experiences to my classmates and then yun, nagtutulungan po kami sa isa't isa kung pano kumalma ganon. Yun lang po, basta be prepared lang po para hindi masyadong malala at least kung prepared ka like this na uhm example nakapag review ka ng maayos it will lessen the anxiety. Yun lang.

With coping with her anxiety, P3 shared that she controls it by practicing relaxation and breathing exercises and preparing for her academic tasks. On the other hand, P1 shared that one of the strategies that she uses to cope with the uncertainty of video-conferencing platform and accompanying anxiety during class is to

make a list or identify and write down her priorities, which makes it easy for her to gain control of her time and manage the worries and problems she is having, specifically with her classes:

P1: ...mahalaga po kasi sa'kin na nakikita ko physically muna kung ano 'yung kailangan kong, parang ino-organize ko muna po, sinusulat ko muna sa papel ano 'yung mga naiisip ko po, kahit na one sentence, or one word lang po. And then, I try to think na ano po 'yung dapat kong unahin, or ano 'yung temporary solution. Iniisip ko po kung ano 'yung consequences kapag hindi ko inuna 'yung ganitong bagay...let's say po ahm, si family problem po, ah, pwede siya after class na lang. Kapag ah, self-problem po, 'pag self-problem po madalas, nagsusulat ako kahit in the middle of the class po para lang makapag release kahit, kahit konting... konting thoughts lang po sa papel. And then kahit papaano, nare-release na 'nun. Kumbaga po nawawala na 'yung tension na nafi-feel ko sa thought na 'yon.

The findings of this study align with existing research on online learning anxiety, particularly in relation to the psychological impact of video-conferencing platforms on students. Studies by Peper et al. (2021) and Bailenson (2021) emphasize that online learning environments can exacerbate social anxiety, as students become more self-conscious about their appearance and the way they are perceived by peers and instructors. The themes identified in this study—such as intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness of anxiety—are consistent with research suggesting that students often experience heightened self-awareness and worry about negative evaluation in virtual settings (Zhao et al., 2022).

Moreover, the theme related to difficulties with focus and blurred boundaries between academic and personal life resonates with the findings of Shao et al. (2021), who reported that the home environment creates challenges in maintaining concentration and differentiating between roles, leading to increased stress levels. The use of coping strategies identified in this study, including breathing exercises, structured routines, and reliance on peer support, is in line with the recommendations of previous studies advocating for self-regulation

techniques and social support networks as effective ways to mitigate online learning anxiety (Stan, et. al., 2022)

However, this study also offers nuanced perspectives that contrast with some existing literature. While some research suggests that online learning reduces anxiety by allowing students more control over their participation (Lei & Medwell, 2021) the current findings indicate that video-conferencing platforms can introduce new stressors, such as technological uncertainties and fear of judgment, which may counteract perceived benefits of control. This discrepancy suggests that the impact of online learning on anxiety may be highly individualized, and influenced by personality traits, prior experiences with technology, and environmental factors.

Discussion

The participants shared that aside from their anxiety, the use of technology also affected their academic experience, specifically on the use of their class video-conferencing platform. They have anxieties when it comes to how they might be perceived by their classmates online. However, in contrast with the findings, according to the study conducted by Yuzer, Aydin, and Gonen (2009), anxiety decreased when participants used a computer program, and a positive correlation between anxiety related to reading and anxiety related to language was also reported. The participants' anxiety is somehow manageable whenever they can find an excuse when it comes to class activities. Hence, as they gained more comfort with the new teaching tool, students became more relaxed. Additionally, they demonstrated favourable attitudes about synchronous classes. The findings on this aspect are aligned with the research by Yuzer, Aydin, and Gonen (2009) showed that interactive online tools that are constructed with learners' needs and perceptions in mind can enable anxiety-free language learning.

The participants have an awareness of their intrapersonal anxiety, so in addition to the use of technology, the participants significantly shared their intrapersonal awareness by describing how they find it difficult at times to distinguish the boundaries of being a student

and having another role or in an environment that is not what they had been used to. Since college and university settings require an increased amount of socialization. Group projects, presentations, or discussions during seminars require students to verbally articulate themselves in front of peers and faculty. Academic and social support systems like peer tutors, office hours, or career planning services also require social interactions. These activities may be challenging for those who experience social anxiety and may have adverse effects on academic performance or even life outcomes. Social anxiety has a significant and negative direct relationship with negative achievement (Brook, C. & Willoughby, T., 2015).

The uncertain nature of video-conferencing platforms, despite their advanced settings in user navigation or user experience, still contributes to the anxiety of the participants. They struggle with the thought of how they may project themselves online, how they will appear to their classmates, which results in having lesser engagement during class. Thus, greater social anxiety has been related to the failure to complete school (Ameringen, Mancini, & Farvolden, 2003), increased risk of exam failure (Wittchen, Stein, & Kessler, 1999). Moreover, in the interview surveys conducted by Son et al., (2020), it appears that multiple stressors were identified as contributors which affect the increase of levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive thoughts among students. Hence, they utilize various coping strategies such as self-control, relaxation and breathing exercises.

Cultural and contextual factors also shape students' anxiety in the Philippine setting. *Hiya* (sense of shame) heightens fear of embarrassment (Biana, 2023), as stated by P1: "...another thing that brings me anxiety po during, the-, during class is kapag gusto ko po sumagot voluntarily but, hindi ko magawa, kase kahit walang nakatingin sa'kin na alam ko na, na naririnig ako ng lahat at hindi ko alam kung ano 'yung pwede nilang maisip dahil hindi ko naman nakikita kung ano 'yung reaction nila tungkol dun sa sagot ko." While collectivist values reinforce pressure to conform. Family expectations and academic pressure further contribute to stress, particularly in multi-generational households where privacy is limited (Singh &

Swarup, 2025). Technological limitations, such as unstable internet access, amplify these challenges, making participation in video-conferencing more anxiety-inducing.

Coping strategies such as self-control, relaxation, and organizational techniques helped participants manage their anxiety. Sit et al. (2005) emphasized that online learning fosters responsibility and independent learning, which was evident in participants' efforts to develop structured coping mechanisms.

One of the strategies that participants may uses to cope with the uncertainty of the video-conferencing platform and accompanying anxiety during class is to make a list or identify and write down their priorities, which makes it easy for them to gain control of her time and manage the worries and problems she is having, specifically with their classes. This implies that video-conferencing platforms during synchronous classes also foster responsibility and independent learning among college students. With these experiences of college students in the use of video-conferencing platforms can challenge them to be more responsible in their study habits and learning styles as supported by the study conducted by Sit, et.al. (2005). Where they explored their own learning and to learn independently.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study adds to the existing body of literature about anxiety-related experiences of college students in the use of video-conferencing platforms during synchronous classes. Various research had been conducted both quantitatively and qualitatively, however, these studies are not fully contextualized in line with the aims of our present study. After analysing the experiences of students, different factors were identified as the findings of this study, specifically, on the use of technology, intrapersonal awareness of anxiety, interpersonal awareness of anxiety, and on coping with anxiety. These findings are valuable for academic institutions in developing policies to manage students' anxiety related to videoconferencing. Moreover, the findings also urge institutions to go beyond focusing solely on the academic outcomes of the students and

revisit traditional frameworks and integrate mental health considerations.

Recommendation

To effectively address the challenges associated with synchronous classes-related anxiety, both educators and policymakers must implement targeted interventions that promote student well-being and engagement.

Educators and academic institutions should establish comprehensive mental health support systems, including counseling services and stress management workshops, to assist students in managing synchronous classes-related anxiety. Providing flexible participation options, such as audio-only features, can support students experiencing social anxiety while maintaining their engagement in virtual classrooms. Clear communication guidelines and asynchronous learning alternatives should also be developed to enhance inclusivity for students facing internet instability and privacy concerns.

Policymakers must implement policies that ensure equitable access to stable internet connectivity and digital resources, particularly for students in underserved communities. Integrating digital literacy and well-being programs into the curriculum can equip students with coping strategies for virtual learning challenges. In addition, faculty training in trauma-informed teaching and student mental health awareness should be promoted to develop psychologically safe learning environments.

Future Research Directions

Given the limitations of the present study, future research should refine methodological approaches to enhance understanding of anxiety-related experiences in synchronous classes. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs can provide stronger causal evidence regarding the impact of video-conferencing platforms on student anxiety.

Key areas for further investigation include assessing the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions in managing anxiety during synchronous class sessions.

Development and validation of psychometric instruments to accurately measure video-

conferencing-related anxiety is also recommended. Conducting meta-analyses of existing research can help identify patterns and underlying factors influencing student anxiety in virtual learning environments. Moreover, employing mixed-method approaches, such as grounded theory and quantitative theory development, can contribute to constructing a comprehensive model of student anxiety in online classrooms.

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