



Lived Experiences of Alternative Learning System Learners during the Pandemic

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Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic has affected the country's educational system including the Alternative Learning System (ALS). The ALS adapts to the new normal of teaching using the modular learning. This phenomenological qualitative research design aimed to determine the lived experiences of the 7 ALS learners during school year 2021-2022. In-depth interviews on the participants were conducted. Data gathered showed 6 essential themes: (a) student-mothers with dual roles; (b) student-workers: learning while earning; (c) unemployment/unable to find work; (d) difficulty in coping modular instructions; (e) resilience and hope; and (f) overcoming challenges. Most learners did not completed their portfolios and preferred to work due to the difficulties in the scheduled distribution and retrieval of modules, financial problems including the sudden increase in transportation fare, male learners need to work to provide the needs of their family, and female learners need to prioritize their children and do household tasks while the husbands are working. The study determined the most effective interventions for these learners to obtain satisfactory rating in their presentation portfolio assessments at the end of the school year.

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Introduction

This Phenomenological Research aimed to identify the lived experiences of the 7 Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners of the Naile Community Learning Center enrolled for School Year 2021-2022 during the pandemic. Teaching diverse learners in the Alternative Learning System had showed that this particular problem occurs rampantly in the day-to-day routine. Due to the implementation of modular learning and various challenges that the ALS learners encountered including financial difficulties while working for the family, struggle with the use and availability of technology; and personal problems on health, stress, and learning style. The researcher wants to study this problem to formulate intervention that could answer these challenges.

Methodology

In this study, the phenomenological qualitative research design would utilized in order for the researcher to comprehensively capture the research questions appropriately and adequately. This study was conducted in Barangay Naile, Ibajay, Aklan and adjacent barangays, Rizal, Naligusan, and San Jose. The participants of the study were the Alternative Learning System learners of Naile Community Learning Center, School Year 2021 – 2022, randomly selected in Barangay Naile, San Jose, Naligusan and Rizal. The subject of the study were composed of seven learners. Three of them are males and four are females. Participants were selected and coded using the pseudonyms and profile. Researcher-made interview guide that was based on the statement of the problem will be used to collect the necessary information from the learners. Questions included in the interview guide are open-ended or unstructured in nature so that it would enable the researcher to insert follow-up questions to extract the most comprehensive and substantial information. Colaizzi's method of data analysis will be used in interpreting the qualitative research data gathered to identify meaningful information and organize it into themes or categories. In the conduct of this study, the researcher made sure that necessary letters of consent were secured and proper coordination with people who have direct involvement in this study was properly conducted. The researcher ensured the anonymity of the learner-participants by using pseudonyms to conceal their real identity. All the information disclosed by the participants were treated with utmost confidentiality by strictly adhering to the provisions of Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Findings

There were 4 essential themes generated as their lived experiences (a) student-mothers with dual roles; (b) student-workers; learning while earning; (c) face-to-face learning becomes modular; (d) experiences on acquiring more lessons on pandemic. The learner-participants of this study were mothers and laborers. Student-mothers take good care of their children, doing household chores at home while studying their modules. Learners who lost their jobs take part time jobs to help their families during pandemic. In the difficulties encountered by the participants, it was categorized into 3 themes; (a) unemployment/unable to find work; (b) no load for data connections or internet access; and (c) difficulty in coping modular instructions. Since the type of learning delivery in times of pandemic was modular, the participants were not able to follow the scheduled distribution and retrieval of modules in Naile CLC. One reason was the unaccomplished activities in the Activity Sheets. Because of the unavailability of load for data connections/internet access, and no face-to-face classes were allowed, learners were not able to interact with their teacher to ask questions with regards to their lesson. In this case, processing of the module's content was very hard for them and lack of explanation coming from the teacher. For this regard, it was a big help for learners that they could access some online learning resources and use these resources as their basis in understanding their lessons or references for learning. There were 3 coping mechanisms shared by the participants in addressing the challenges they encountered; (a) drawing strength from God, family and friends; (b) doing useful things at home with family; and (c) maintain positive communication with family and friends.

Conclusion

1. Pandemic taught ALS learners' different lessons in life that could help them to survive in their day-to-day living.
2. Unemployment or unable to find work during pandemic was their biggest challenge. They could not support the needs of their family especially their basic needs.
3. The participants were able to come up with different coping mechanisms to combat challenges they encountered in relation to their education as ALS learners which only confirms that they are resilient.
4. Problems, issues, challenges, and difficulties encountered by the ALS learners while battling with COVID-19 pandemic could be addressed if relevant and appropriate programs would be implemented.

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