# Transition from online to onsite learning: Standpoints of college students in a government-funded institution

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 global pandemic has an immense impact in the lives of the people all over the world, and the educational system is one of those who struggled to adjust to the catastrophic event. The new curriculum faced setbacks from the difficulties to effectuate students' social presence and create a safe and effective learning environment. This study determined the undergraduate students learning preference, specifically between online and on-site learning; the impact of the sudden shift to the students social, economic or financial, and academic performance; and the coping strategies used by students to overcome the challenges brought by the change of learning modality. Systematic random sampling was used to select 30 students who served as respondents of the study. Results showed that on-site learning was preferred over online learning modality as it impacted the students in terms of social interaction, active participation, and accessibility to resources. Most of the students revealed that the shift in learning modality has brought about challenges in their physical, moral, emotional and social well-being, financial stability, and academic performance. But they had overcome these with the support of their family, friends, and love ones. This pandemic has taught students the importance of time management, flexibility and resilience, and strong bond with people they can work and open up well.

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## Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak has significantly influenced the social, economic, and educational aspects of people's life. These effects were experienced by educational institutions globally during the height of the pandemic from 2019 to 2021. All educational institutions were forced to close and the whole system shifted to online platforms and related modalities. Now that the classes in the country have resumed, the common way of teaching started to emerge and teachers also adjusted the mode of instruction and curriculum to deliver the best for students' learning. Classrooms were designed to cater to the safety of the learners and to ensure that schools were ready to implement the government mandated orders following health protocols.

After two years of fighting the widespread virus, schools and other learning spaces were compelled to adopt onsite learning after the governments have declared that the epidemic has waned. Because of that, a number of students have experienced challenges in adjusting to the transition of going back to the new normal after being immersed to the online setting. Most students, parents, and teachers reacted to the transition positively, while others perceived this transition negatively, for some reasons. Studies claim that onsite learning is an effective modality in terms of environment, teaching-learning process, and interaction (Singh & Thurman, 2019; Wargadinata et al., 2020) while others raise their concerns that the onsite setting is costly considering the increased rate of commodities and services. On the other hand, some students believed that learning online deprived them to develop their social skills and increase their anxiety (Alsaaty et al., 2016; Habib et al.,2022). They revealed that several challenges in a home learning setting have been experienced, including the lack of technological proficiency, expensive Internet costs, and restricted interaction/socialization among students (Kapasia et al., 2020; Suryaman et al., 2020).

Thus, this study tried to gather the standpoints and determined the student's learning preferences between online and onsite learning. It tried to find out the impact of the sudden shift from online to onsite learning on the student's social, economic/financial, and academic performance. And, it also established the students' coping strategies during the transition from online to onsite learning.

## Methodology

This study employed the mixed method of research to determine the standpoint or preference of college students between online to onsite learning after the return of classes in school campuses.

The 30 randomly selected respondents were 3$^{rd}$ and 4$^{th}$ year education students specializing in English language from a government-funded institution in Aklan enrolled during the second semester of academic year 2022-2023. A validated survey questionnaire was used to gather both the qualitative and quantitative data. It was divided into four sections: (1) participant's personal information section; (2) the learning preferences of the respondents; (3) the rating scale section for the impact of the transition from online to onsite learning; (4) the open-ended section. Quantitative data gathered from the survey were analyzed using percentage and frequency of a Microsoft software while the qualitative data were categorized accordingly. Permission and informed consent were sought from the school head and the respondents, respectively, for ethical consideration.

## Findings

Based from the data gathered, analyzed, and interpreted, findings revealed that between the two learning modalities, the onsite learning modality topped all the item indicators making it obviously the preferred learning mode where students could learn effectively, interact with other people, access most of the learning resources, and have meaningful discussions. This result is parallel to the findings of Singh and Thurman (2019) that while students appreciated the use of online learning during the pandemic, half of them thought that traditional classroom instruction was more effective than online learning.

As to the effects of the transition from online to onsite, the data showed that students were having a hard time budgeting their allowance during onsite classes. Some factors they mentioned were housing and transportation, technology and materials, course materials and textbooks, work and income, and miscellaneous expenses. However, in online classes, students had problems on availability of gadgets, Internet connectivity, and provision for e-load. The same observations were found in the study of Khalil et al. (2020) where students have perceived synchronous online learning positively, particularly in terms of time management and efficacy; however, they also have identified technological (internet access and low tool

usefulness), methodological (content delivery), and behavioral (individual personality) problems.

As regards social interaction, it was found out that in online classes, students had a hard time socializing because the interactions were done on screen. This lack of social interaction has made it difficult for learners to conduct group work virtually (Alsaaty et al., 2016; Habib et al., 2022). The lack of social interaction might also decrease learning motivation; thus, teachers need to improve their pedagogical methods and improvise aspects of the curriculum to render it suitable for online learning.

In the academic performances of students, while respondents agreed that they learn best if it was onsite, they also moderately agreed that their outputs get higher scores when submitted online compared to doing it onsite. As shown in the study of Kemp and Grieve (2014) undergraduate Psychology students in Australian universities preferred to complete tasks in person rather than online; they would choose to undertake written tasks online rather than engage in conversation in person.

When asked how they handled the transition from online to onsite learning, they mentioned that they did it with the help of their support system that included their family, classmates, and friends. Other strategies mentioned were time management, self-improvement, self-discipline, and adaptability. Findings from previous studies corroborate with this result. Alsaaty et al. (2016) and Kapasia et al. (2020) mentioned that interaction made it possible for learners to connect to their teachers and peers.

## Conclusion

It is evident that students were the ones who have been affected the most in the transition of online to onsite learning in terms of social, financial, and academic endeavors. The shift of learning modality was a big challenge to students, particularly to those enrolled during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. However, this has taught lessons to students such as the value of time management and the importance of the support system in facing the challenges. They also learned how to disciplined themselves especially when they attend classes in different modalities. This enabled them to monitor their learning progress and to determine whether they are learning effectively or not.

Learning is a continuous process that educational institutions were still able to manage and provide solutions to emergency situations as the pandemic. The teachers have found ways and been adjusted their teaching strategies to go about the differing needs of their students. Online learning may not be as effective as the onsite modality because of the negative outlook it has created among the learners but no matter what the strategy is, the school, the teacher and students have to collaborate to get by the objectives of each one attained. Revisit the curriculum, review the teaching-learning strategy, assess the preparations of teachers, and audit the physical and technical resources of the school community. There may be aspects in the system that needs to be changed and enhanced to attain what the school envisions, and the learners expect to get. This might have been the reason that blended learning came in and that its use depends upon what the learners need and when they need it. Moreover, the government should take a closer look at supporting the education sector by providing adequate support, if not free resources and services to students, especially those who are struggling financially.

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