Valuing Resilience Amid Covid-19 Challenges: Filipino College Students' Experiences

Karen V. Rendeza[1]

[1]Faculty, College of Education, Bulacan State University,
PhD in Counseling candidate, Philippine Normal University

Abstract

This study investigated the experiences of Filipino college students during the more than a year-long COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Using the explanatory sequential design, an online survey was conducted with two hundred seventy-one respondents from Luzon, aging eighteen years old and above, both male and female, pursuing different bachelor's degree programs. Afterward, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to crystallize salient points in the survey findings. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze survey data, and Thematic Analysis was used for the qualitative part of this study. Results revealed that Filipino students are highly resilient, as depicted in their different ways of surviving to better cope with the education being migrated to online platforms just to continue with the School Year 2020-2021. Further, comprehending the COVID-19 phenomenon and the reasons behind the policies associated with the declaration of the different community quarantine classifications helped the students better deal with the changes, disruptions and uncertainties brought about by the pandemic. Understanding the plight and survival stories of the students could be of great help in crafting relevant response programs and policies that would make the psychological well-being of the Filipino learners sustained amid crises.

Keywords: psychological strength, help, survival, physical and mental health

1 Introduction

The Coronavirus pandemic has changed our life and the way we live during its envasion. Many establishments and schools were forced to close, as a way of ensuring the safety of everyone. Community quarantine in different classifications has disrupted our freedom to go where we want to so that the rapid spread of COVID-19 may be avoided. Hence, the education sector was left to this option to go for flexible learning. Education was then abruptly migrated to the digital space.

The study of Pokhrel & Chhetri (2021) mentioned that COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in human history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than two hundred countries worldwide. The closures of schools, institutions and other

learning spaces have impacted more than ninety-four percent (94%) of the world's student population.

Further, the findings of Yang et al (2021) revealed that academic workload, separation from school, and fears of contagion may contribute to youth's general perceived stress, which in turn, may negatively influence their physical and psychological health. While existing studies talk about the effects of the pandemic on the mental health of the learners, this study aims to highlight the survival stories of students going to digital school amid the coronavirus contagion.

The researcher is also a student in the graduate school in this time of pandemic, and having experienced availing formal education in the digital space is truly memorable. It is indeed very challenging to study online while in a way it's convenient to be able to gain number of units in a term or semester without physically going to school. The issues of digital divide and internet access obviously interfere with the teaching-learning process in the digital space especially during this crisis situation. Having experienced also taking the comprehensive examination online has made the researcher think about the situation of the younger learners including those in tertiary level.

According to Son et al (2020), the long-lasting pandemic crisis and various government mandates on combatting the COVID-19 pandemic has brought negative impacts on higher education. Browning et al (2021) found out that efforts to recognize and address the mental health challenges of the college students when not sufficient especially during this time of pandemic could have long-term consequences on their health and education. Sun et al (2014) found out that separation from school is positively related to college students' perceived stress during homeschooling. Moreover, the presence of COVID-19 is an additional factor for students to be stressed and anxious about (Pragholapati, 2020). The study of Khoshaim et al (2020) revealed that around thirty-five percent of the students experienced some level of anxiety, with thirteen percent having severe to extreme levels of anxiety.

Resilience is necessary to combat painful and very difficult situations in life. Being resilient does not mean that life is a bed of roses, but rather it means being able to bounce back to life no matter how traumatic one has experienced in life. The seven Cs model of resilience by pediatrician Kenneth Ginsburg was used in this study. Ginsburg's model highlights two key points namely: (1) Young people live up or down to the expec-

tations that are set for them and need adults who love them unconditionally and hold them to high expectations. (2) How we model resilience for young people is far more important than what we say about it (Hurley et al, n.d.). The 7 Cs of Resilience include Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, Contribution, Coping, and Control depict the interplay between personal strengths and outside resources, regardless of age.

The present study was conducted in the light of understanding more closely the plight of Filipino tertiary learners in combatting academic stress amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings of this may be used in crafting relevant programs and policies more appropriate and responsive to the needs of the tertiary learners especially in times of crisis.

2   Materials and Methods

1. Research Design

   This study used the Explanatory Sequential Research Design. An explanatory sequential design according to Creswell (2014) and Bowen et al (2017) consists of first collecting quantitative data and then collecting qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results. This approach with the quantitative data has showed a general picture of the experiences of the Filipino college students in Luzon during the COVID-19 pandemic, and more analysis was done specifically through qualitative data collection to refine, extend or explain the students' resilience. (Creswell, 2014; Bowen et al, 2017)

2. Research Population and Sampling

   This study used random sampling with two hundred seventy-one actual male and female respondents. The online survey was conducted on May 2020 after two months of Enhanced Community Quarantine and closures of schools. The respondents are with age ranging from eighteen to fifty years old, and most of them are 20 years old (29. 89%) and 19 years old (23.25%); pursuing their bachelor's degree in different colleges and universities for School Year 2020-2021 in Luzon area. To elucidate further the results of

the survey, online interviews with 3 participants and 5 online Focus Group Discussions with 21 participants were conducted on July 2021.

3. Research Instruments

The researcher's made questionnaire converted into online survey was used for the quantitative part of this study and relevant guide questions were formulated for the interviews and focus group discussions. The questionnaire was content-validated by three experts in the fields of Psychology, Guidance and Counseling and Education. The items are crafted based on the existing related studies and on the observations also of the researcher who is a practicing educator, school counselor, and a PhD student in the context of the education in the new normal. The instruments were pilot tested before using them for the actual data collection.

4. Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data gathered from the survey and Thematic Analysis was utilized in analyzing the qualitative data gathered.

For the quantitative data, a 4-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of awareness and truthfulness of the items or statements for the respondents. The scale is set at 4 for very much aware or very much like me or strongly agree; 3 for aware, like me, or agree; 2 for somewhat aware or sometimes like me or disagree; and 1 for not aware or not like me or strongly disagree.

The mean score for each component or dimension is divided into four categories. The range of scores is done by adding the lowest and highest score. The sum was divided by 4 and the resulting interval is 1.25. Hence, the corresponding degree of awareness or truthfulness can be qualitatively interpreted as very good, good, fair, or poor to reflect the quality of every statement in the questionnaire.

5. Ethical Considerations

The data were gathered with Informed Consent from the respondents and participants. Code names were used to ensure confidentiality of their real identity. The collected data were deleted after they have been analyzed and the full paper was written to safeguard data privacy.

Participants in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were properly oriented about the study and knew beforehand the composition of each group. They voluntarily agreed to be a part of the FGD.

3   Results

Being in the pandemic for more than a year now calls for a need to find ways on how we can sustain resilience and still live a meaningful and fruitful life despite the crisis. Having been in remote learning for a school year has brought a variety of experiences to the tertiary learners, both the desirable and the unpleasant ones.

This study delved into the experiences of the Filipino college students who were able to finish the School Year 2020-2021 exhibiting resilience amid the pandemic challenges.Specifically, the importance of being aware about the facts on COVID-19 was studied as well as the experiences of the college students, their coping strategies and values learned during the pandemic.

Awareness on COVID 19 Pandemic

With the Mean of 3.62 and Standard Deviation (SD) 0.24, findings of this study reveal that the respondents are aware of the different facts about COVID-19.

The participants in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and interviews said that understanding the facts about COVID-19 is important so that people will be able to obey correctly the mandates of proper authorities in keeping everybody safe and in preventing the rapid spread of coronavirus. Rational, analytical and critical thinking are important in this time of pandemic.

"Kailangan po talaga nating malaman kung ano yung mga katoto-hanan about sa COVID-19. . . sa COVID-19 response yung magiging problema po kadalasan yung misinformation po, yung fake news. . . "

"For safety natin. . . prevention na pwede nating gawin in terms of covid-19 dahil syempre para ma-avoid nating yung mismong sakit na yun. . . "

". . . prevention, pag-iingat at sa mga steps na gagawin para paano siya mali-lessen and such. . . kapag alam ng tao kung para saan yung sinasabi ng government, yung naiintindihan nila, lalo na yung mga tao na kailangan, alam nyo yung from day to day busy sila, kailangang ku-mita ganyan so sila yung pinaka apektado, so kapag alam nila kung para saan, alam nila na, malinaw sa kanila na para sa kanila din yun, mas madaling susunod. . . "

Legal Bases on COVID 19 Pandemic Response Mandates in the Philippines

The Mean of 2.87 and SD 0.19 shows that the respondents are aware of the legal bases of the government mandates on proper health protocols and other relevant laws. Likewise, the participants in the FGDs and interviews said that obedience to the guidelines set by the Inter-Agency Task Force for Infectious Diseases is necessary as part of being responsible citizens who also think of the welfare of others aside from the self.

". . . to give all of us learning to be a responsible citizen by obeying the law implemented by our government or the what we call the health protocol, o simpleng pag-aalaga sa ating sarili, dahil gusto po ng lahat sa atin na maging ligtas. . . "(competence)

". . . para naman sa mga policies ay kung ano ang mga dapat nating gawin para masunod yung mga health protocol, para mapanatili ang kaligtasan natin at ng ating pamilya. . . "

"...it's for the health ng nakararami and in-implement nila ito para sundin hindi para balewalain. . . "

The Respondents' Feelings about the COVID 19 Pandemic

With the Mean of 2.98 (SD 0.55), findings depict the mix emotions of the respondents as early as two months in community quarantine due

to the COVID-19 pandemic. Feelings like very blessed, happy to be still alive, afraid to get infected, angry of quarantine violators, and hurt about deaths and painful stories about the COVID-19 patients are also felt by the participants. The feeling of isolation was also felt by some students.

"… feeling of isolation, ayun po, ang hirap po mag-aral kapag mag-isa lang sa bahay and then malayo po yung mga classmate, mahirap po mag group activity kapag magkakahiwalay…"

"… feeling of isolation, ayun po, ang hirap po mag-aral kapag mag-isa lang sa bahay and then malayo po yung mga classmate, mahirap po mag group activity kapag magkakahiwalay…"

"… feeling of isolation din po talaga pong amm… yung nandito ka lang sa bahay hindi mo po alam kung tama ba yung tinuturo mo sa sarili mo sa online class kasi po di ba parang wala din po naman kasing response yung ibang mga prof, yung mga prof sa activity. Pag sa face to face po, sasabihin po yung mali mo, yung ganun. Ngayon po kasi talagang papasa ka lang. We don't know kung talagang tama ba iyon or mali, yung tinuturo mo ba sa sarili mo tama or ano, parang yun po, ang dami po talagang nakaka-stress…"

Self-doubt and lack of motivation also surfaced during the focus group discussions.

"… self-doubt, like ida-doubt mo na lang talaga yung mga kakaya-han mo lalo na yung sa acads, minsan mapapaisip ka may natutunan ka ba talaga or sapat ba talaga yung ginagawa mo, minsan kakapit ka na lang sa validation ng ibang tao kasi ikaw sa sarili mo hindi mo din alam kung tama yung ginagawa mo…" (character)

"… parang nakakawalang gana nang kumilos, hindi po katulad ng dati mas mabigat mag exert ng effort sa pag aaral or gumawa ng mga bagay bagay, and ako po kasi before active po ako sa extra-curriculars and gusto ko siya ipagpatuloy, so I continue accepting positions, pero kahit gaano mo i-deny alam mong may nagbago and mas nakaka-frustrate siya kasi nafi-feel at nakikita mo siya kung papaano ka magtrabaho before sa kung paano ka magtrabaho ngayon, tapos makikita mo kung gaano kalala yung dinown-grade ng quality nya…"
Education Amid the COVID 19 Pandemic

The Mean of 2.48 and SD of 0.65 shows that the respondents are aware

about the COVID-19 phenomenon which caused the abrupt migration of education to the digital platforms. Such has led them to experience flexible learning using different digital platforms while they also deal with their limitations with gadget and internet connection.

Likewise, the participants of FGD shared that the most common difficulties they encountered during the education in the new normal include financial problem because of unemployment of the breadwinner in the family brought about by closures of many establishments. With poverty goes the incapacity of the students to provide themselves with educational resources like gadgets and internet access for flexible learning. Health is also a main concern because of academic stress they experienced.

Likewise, the participants of FGD shared that the most common difficulties they encountered during the education in the new normal include financial problem because of unemployment of the breadwinner in the family brought about by closures of many establishments. With poverty goes the incapacity of the students to provide themselves with educational resources like gadgets and internet access for flexible learning. Health is also a main concern because of academic stress they experienced.

"… financial problem since pandemic po, wala pong trabaho yung magulang ko po, ayun, problem ko po na magpa-load ng internet, weekly…"

"Dahil nawalan po ng trabaho yung nanay ko, isa po siyang ahh… mananahi, dahil po dito nagkulang o nawalan po ako ng allowance na gagamitin para pang load weekly po for online classes…"

"Nagkaroon po kami ng financial crisis. May financial problem din po kami sa aming pamilya dahil po, nung mga bandang kalahati ng, mga September, simulan, simula po ng September po last year ay nawalan po ng trabaho yung tatay ko po. Siya lang po yung naghahanap buhay sa amin. Wala din po kaming ibang panghanap-buhay ammm… siya lang po talaga yung, yung bread winner po and higit pa po doon amm… nagkaroon din po kasi ng ano, nag, naging COVID-19 positive po sya.."
"Sobrang naging anxious po sa, sa future sobrang naaapekto, naaapektohan po yung mental health po, siyempre po family problem hindi lang, kasabay po nun ahh… may mga school works po, may mga projects…"

"Yung internet connection po and then yung mga gadget din po na gagamitin for the online class. Hindi naman ganun kaayos yung, yung mga gadget ko, samahan pa po ng low internet connection…"

"Medyo napapalayo po sa church community. Iba po kasi talaga yung onsite worship service. Noon po madalas po akong magpunta sa worship service po namin at ngayon ay hindi na gaano. . . "

"Faith testing. . . pumasok na po yung family problem, pumasok na po yung pagiging anxious sa future and, and parang na-testing po talaga yung faith ko dito, parang amm. . . kung, kung sa ganitong challenges ano kaya yung, ano kaya yung posibleng response ng isang, isang taong may pananampalataya so, ayun po, meron pong, dumating po sa time na, na kine-question ko na po bakit po, bakit po ganito yung mga challenges na dumadating sa, sa buhay, parang amm. . . maniniwala pa ba ako. . . "

"Time management kasi po ako yung nakatoka sa mga household, household chores. Tapos gagawa ka pa ng mga school works eh third year na po parang sobrang dami po naming kailangang gawin. Kaya hirap po ako mag-manage tapos tutulungan ko pa yung mga kapatid ko sa module. Magsasauli din po ako sa school. Minsan, nagku-conflict, nai-stress ako lalo kapag may klase tapos late magsauli ng modules. Minsan po pagka nagsasauli po ako ng module, habang naglalakad ako, nakabukas yung Google Meet. Guilty po ako dun. . . "

Part of the experiences of the tertiary learners in education in the new normal is thinking about their readiness to join the workforce after graduation in college. The findings of Cleofas (2020) is consistent with the results of the study of Power et al. (2020) mentioning that the transition from tertiary education to the labor market is a crucial part of a graduate's journey. The economic recessions and lack of social connectedness due to COVID-19 pandemic have resulted to poorer mental outcomes among the youth which may affect their adult coping skills. The anxiety and frustrations expressed by the participants in the study of Cleofas (2020) mirror the psychological distress outcomes in other studies done in China (Cao et al., 2020).

Worry about employment opportunities for the graduates during the COVID-19 envasion when the education sector needed to continue moving forward using the cyberspace was also mentioned in the focus group discussions conducted in this present study.

"Naisip ko na parang ang hirap pala, paano kapag hindi pa 'to (the pandemic) natapos na mag-graduate na. . . tas ganun pa rin,.. ang dami ng walang trabaho. Papaano silang naunang grumaduate sa akin? Wala silang trabaho. . . so paano pa ako?"

The Respondents' Survival like food supply, medicine, water, etc. and Availability and Access during Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ)

Having the Mean of 2.56 and SD of 0.62, findings reveal that the respondents experienced difficulty in life because of the various effects of the pandemic like unemployment of the bread winners in their family. The spirit of sharing and caring (bayanihan) helped them make ends meet and survive.

"Dati ang binibili po namin is for one month ngayon ahh. . . ay for one week, ngayon naging for one month na and then challenge din po samin kung paano namin siya paaabutin ng one month kasi minsan po di naman natin maiiwasan na may mga neighbors tayo na kinukulang, syempre ikaw as a helpful naman diba magbibigay ka rin po sa kanila kahit kaunti. . . " (connection)

While the students worry about the sustainability of their access to food and other basic needs within the implementation of the community quarantine, some also worry about their employment opportunities after graduation. The question of "where are we going after graduation in college" is a valid question for individuals who witnessed massive closures of establishments and the increasing unemployment rate worldwide.

Coping Mechanisms during the COVID 19 pandemic
With the Mean of 2.77 and SD 0.47, findings show the different ways of coping of the respondents about the difficulties they have been into during the community quarantine due to the pandemic.

With the Mean of 2.77 and SD 0.47, findings show the different ways of coping of the respondents about the difficulties they have been into during the community quarantine due to the pandemic.

". . . very hard and challenging in the way na nahirapan na po ako na mag-adjust sa new normal curriculum na meron po tayo ngayon because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lahat po kami ng mga estudyante hindi handa sa ganitong klaseng uri ng pag-aaral kasi po unexpected po ang lahat ng nangyari at hindi po kami knowledgeable about different online platform na ginagamit po namin during online class. . . and we are not equipped po and gadgets na need po namin sa online class.. pero unti-unti din po namin itong natutunan. . . "
"napaka-mapanghamon, kahit na marami akong pinagdadaanan mula

sa maliliit hanggang sa malalaking hamon ay marami po akong natuklasan sa tao, sa aking paligid, sa sarili ko at kay Lord. Naka-survive din po ako sa school year na ito. Dahil sa faithfulness ni Lord, nakita ko kung gaano Siya laging nagpu-provide sa akin at kung papaano Niya ako tinutulungan kahit sa simpleng gawain sa school. Iito talaga yung, ito talaga ay yung season of growth at pagkilala kung sino Siya at ano ang kaya Niyang gawin…"

"Mas naging mahirap po sa akin kasi ayun,… ito po yung school year na pinaka-mahirap po para sa akin, dahil sa pandemic na ito. Dahil po sa new normal education na nararanasan po natin ngayon, hindi lang po ako gumigising para lang mag-aral… pati na rin po tumulong sa mga gawaing bahay. Minsan po hindi po ako makapag-focus kasi pag may klase nga, ayun nga po, nabanggit ko kanina pag po may klase or may gawain ako, Diyos ko, wag niyo naman ako utusan, kasi wala naman po akong ibang kapatid na, na susunod din po. Tapos nagkasabay-sabay din po ang nga gawain." (coping)

"Very challenging yung student life ko sa college this school year 2020, 2021 kasi online class nga po. Kumbaga, nakakapanibago yung platform ng pag-aaral. So, lahat po kami nag ahh… kailangan mag-adjust, kailangan mag ano, mag adopt. Unlike face to face po na alam mo na yung takbo ng mga mangyayari. So, very challenging po"

"Challenging din po kasi bago lang po kami sa online class. Hindi din naman po tulad sa face to face na gamay na po naming… and also stressful din po kasi nga po ang daming challenges din po na kinakaharap. Ngayon po parang nagda-doubt po ako sa sarili ko kasi, parang ngayon nagpapasa lang po kami for completion. Parang nag-doubt po ako sa sarili ko kung deserve ko po ba itong grade na ito…"

"Napaka-challenging po talaga ng pandemic especially po sa course namin kailangan po sana namin ng laboratory for experiments pero dahil po pandemic at nag-u-online class lang po, so, yung mga laboratory po namin ehh… output lang din talaga. So, sobrang challenging po."

"Napaka-challenging! Surviving ako at hindi pangkaraniwan ang school year. Ahh… actually po ahh… graduating students po kami, so, ngayon po is four hours duty po kami. Ang hirap po maghanap ng company na may virtual internship. So ahh… ayun, so, napakahirap ng amm… mga rules ngayon. Napaka-challenging na na-survive ko yung school year…" (coping)

Being resilient is also shown on how the students manage their finances considering the scarcity of money and other material resources they experienced.

"I learned to save money kahit ano lang po siya, kahit piso, five ganun para next week, kunyari po ngayon may load ako next week meron akong extra para maka-atend ng online class. . . " (control)

"In terms of internet and gadget ayan nanaman po dahil doon sa naipon na pera nung may mga pasok, may mga pasok pa. . . "
"Naghanap po ako ng mga scholarship. . . binigyan po ako ng 1-time financial assistance ng CHED.."

"Dahil nga po mahina yung data, nagpupunta po ako kila Tita o kaya sa mga kakilala ko pong meron pong Wi-Fi para po maki-connect. . . "

"Yung sa financial problem po actually hindi ko po talaga siya nabigyan ng strategies kaso nga lang po ang nangyari bale, humingi po muna ako sa mga magulang ko po ng pang, pang load sa internet. Tapos nanghiram po ako sa iba kong mga kaibigan sa iba po, ay sa kapatid ko pong isa ng cellphone para may magamit sa online classes. . . "

"May ipon din po ako na kinailangan ko din po siyang galawin. So, hindi ko naman po siya winaldas. Nag-ano po ako, nagnegosyo po ako kasi nga po wala na din pong work yung nanay ko. Tapos po kailangan ko din po silang suportahan. May bunso din po akong kapatid at yung kuya ko po ay PWD. . . "
"Nagtitipid ako. Pag kunyari naabutan ako ng nanay ko. sini-save ko yun para at least kapag kunyari may kailangan ako bilhin, hindi ko na siya hihingiin kay nanay. . . "

"Natuto akong mag-manage ng personal money, like magtabi ng pocket money ganun kasi sometimes may mga biglaan na kailangang bilhin. . . (control)

The findings of Cleofas (2020) highlights adaptability, reflexivity and optimism during COVID-19. Walsh (2020) suggested that making meanings during the pandemic, and learning from the past and re-imagining the future given a present full of losses are important to develop resilience and hope. Further, the significance of resilience as a mediator of optimism and well-being among Filipino college students has also been established in the study (Miranda & Cruz, 2020). Interventions to support mental

health and psycho social development among students may also focus on hopefulness and adaptability

Table 7. Wishes and Hopes of the Respondent

The Mean 3.73 (SD 0.18) shows that the respondents are hopeful for the end of COVID-19 pandemic, giving them precious lessons in life as they move on. Hence, it is a big help for the students to inculcate and imbibe upon themselves the VALUES that will make them survive the challenges in the education in the new normal. These values include: having faith in God, being responsible, honest, optimistic, determined, hardworking, disciplined, patient, dedicated, motivated, grateful, persevering, persistent to achieve goals, progressive, hopeful, obedient, adaptive, creative, courageous, kind, considerate, humble, empathic, understanding, prudent, accepting, and the values of time and self-love.

4   Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study vis-à-vis with the results of the existing studies and literature on the mental health of the tertiary learners in the global and local scenarios.

The Seven Essential Building Blocks of Resilience include: (1) **Competence.** This is the ability to know how to handle situations effectively. To build competence, individuals develop a set of skills to help them trust their judgments and make responsible choices. (2) **Confidence.** Dr. Ginsburg says that true self-confidence is rooted in competence. Individuals gain confidence by demonstrating competence in real-life situations. (3) **Connection.** Close ties to family, friends, and community provide a sense of security and belonging. (4) **Character**. Individuals need a fundamental sense of right and wrong to make responsible choices, contribute to society, and experience self-worth. (5) **Contribution.** Ginsburg says that having a sense of purpose is a powerful motivator. Contributing to one's community reinforces positive reciprocal relationships. (6) **Coping.** When people learn to cope with stress effectively, they are better prepared to handle adversity and setbacks. (7) **Control.** Developing an understanding of internal control helps individuals act as problem-solvers instead of victims of circumstance. When individuals learn that they can control the outcomes of their decisions, they are more likely to view themselves as capable and confident.

Resilience is one important dimension of a positive mental health. It is a character trait and a strength that can be learned (Riopel, 2021). The Summary of Findings of this study is patterned in the model of resilience developed by Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg called the 7Cs of Resilience. Having these Cs exhibited by college students may mean that they have mastered these characteristics of a resilient person during childhood and teen years which made them equipped to combat the challenges of college life.

1. **Competence.**
   The students showed to be knowledgeable of the different facts & laws about COVID-19. Such awareness has helped them behave rationally and responsibly.

   "For safety natin... prevention na pwede nating gawin in terms of covid-19 dahil syempre para ma-avoid nating yung mismong sakit na yun..."

   "...to give all of us learning to be a responsible citizen by obeying the law implemented by our government or the what we call the health protocol, o simpleng pag-aalaga sa ating sarili, dahil gusto po ng lahat sa atin na maging ligtas..."

2. **Confidence.**
   The students are hopeful for the end of COVID-19 pandemic, giving us precious lessons in life as we move on.

   "...para naman sa mga policies ay kung ano ang mga dapat nating gawin para masunod yung mga health protocol, para mapanatili ang kaligtasan natin at ng ating pamilya..."

3. **Connection.**
   The respondents' experienced difficulty in life because of unemployment of their bread winners, but survived during the Enhance Community Quarantine (ECQ) due to the help received from the government, neighbors, and fellow Filipinos with generous hearts who provided them food to eat and their other necessities.

   "dati ang binibili po namin is for one month ngayon ahh... ay for one week, ngayon naging for one month na and then challenge din po samin kung paano namin siya paaabutin ng one month kasi

minsan po di naman natin maiiwasan na may mga neighbors tayo na kinukulang, syempre ikaw as a helpful naman diba magbibigay ka rin po sa kanila kahit kaunti..."

4. **Character**

   The respondents are aware about the COVID-19 pandemic which caused the abrupt migration of education to the digital platforms, thereby gave them the experience of online learning as they also deal with their limitations with gadget and internet connection inasmuch as they also go for the continuity of learning amid the pandemic.

   "Self-doubt, like ida-doubt mo na lang talaga yung mga kakayahan mo lalo na yung sa acads, minsan mapapaisip ka may natutunan ka ba talaga or sapat ba talaga yung ginagawa mo, minsan kakapit ka na lang sa validation ng ibang tao kasi ikaw sa sarili mo hindi mo din alam kung tama yung ginagawa mo..."

5. **Contribution**

   The students should have VALUES like faith in God, being responsible and courageous among others that would help them survive the challenges of education in the new normal. Hence, being strong by themselves also carry with it the opportunities for them to be able to help others. Re-calibrated policies and programs may be crafted to inculcate and reinforce these values among the students.

6. **Coping.**

   Feelings like very blessed, happy to be still alive, afraid to get infected, angry of quarantine violators, feeling of isolation, and feeling hurt about deaths and painful stories of the COVID-19 patients were felt by the students. *"feeling of isolation, ayun po, ang hirap po mag-aral kapag mag-isa lang sa bahay and then malayo po yung mga classmate, mahirap po mag group activity kapag magkakahi-walay...*"

   "napaka challenging, surviving at hindi pangkaraniwan ahh... actually po ahh... graduating students po kami, so, ngayon po is four hour duty po kami, ang hirap po maghanap ng company na may virtual internship, so ahh... ayun, so, napakahirap ng amm... mga rules ngayon, napaka-challenging na-survive ko yung school year..."

7. **Control.**
In more than a year-long community quarantine, the students were able to adapt to the changes happened in their life and around them.

"natuto ako na mag manage ng personal money, like magtabi ng pocket money ganun kasi sometimes may mga biglaan na kailangang bilihin…"

"I learned to save money kahit ano lang po siya, kahit piso, five ganun para next week, kunyari po ngayon may load ako next week meron akong extra para maka-attend ng online class…"

According to Son et al (2020), there is an urgent need to develop interventions and preventive strategies to address the mental health of college students. Abroad, HundrED has documented, packaged and released through its website https://hundred.org/en/collections/quality-education-for-all-during-coronavirus a collection of 30 simple, yet effective solutions that help parents, teachers and children navigate through the plethora of challenges facing education during the pandemic (Petrie, 2020).

According to Liotine and Magee (2020), teachers can best help students when they understand where students are coming from, they acknowledge the difficulties the students face, and then help them pick up the pieces to sustain their overall long-term goals in life. The adults and teachers are not meant to have all the answers, but in order to best serve the students in this current situation, it is critical that teachers and parents continue to serve as beacons of hope that can help guide the students through these turbulent waters.

Walsh (2020) mentioned about bouncing forward as essential part of resilience. It is adapting to the changing world to bravely face uncertainties in the future which involves new sense of normalcy to recalibrate or lives in confronting unanticipated life events.

For sound mental health, striking the balance among the different aspects of our life is necessary. For education in the Philippine context, some suggested programs and policies that may be implemented to build and sustain resilience among the students include:

1. One week Wellness break for teachers and students at the middle of the semester Drop Everything And Rest (DEAR). Teachers and students

may do the digital detox at the same time which means to say that both are absent in the cyberspace, giving themselves time to really absorb and digest what have been in life and to find time to rest.

2. Customized syllabus – focus only on the most essential competencies achievable for the semester in the context of distance learning amid the health, economic and mental health crises, considering that most college students have full academic load (7 subjects of 21 units in a semester).

3. Limit the screen time of the students by conducting online synchronous class in a maximum of one and a half hours only every other week per subject. The teaching- learning process is supplemented by the asynchronous modality to address the issue of digital divide and low internet connection. Information overload and screen exhaustion may be lessen if not avoided with this learning set-up.

4. One output for many subjects to save energy and resources on the part of the learners. This means that the teachers may give one major activity only that will cover for an output of the student in two or three subjects. It's like hitting many birds with one stone.

5. Regular and sustainable programs relevant to a healthy learning environment in digital space like the practices of advocating to be digital citizens, teaching the students how to use the information technology and the digital space properly, reinforcing correct self-care practices.

6. Regularly communicate test results and constructive feedback to the learners. Give the students feedback about their academic performance for them to appreciate their correct output better and improve their low quality output.

7. Creation of study group or support group for students facilitated by qualified adults for the students to talk it out, express their thoughts and feelings once in a while and address their feeling of isolation. It is important to note that the online Focus Group Discussions conducted in this study also served as the Talk Therapy for the participants. They feel better, relieved, and happy after the session because it is a way of re-connecting with their peers and classmates not just mentally but also emotionally.

5   Conclusion

Filipino college students are highly resilient as depicted on their different ways of surviving to better cope with the education being migrated to online platforms just to continue with the School Year 2020-2021. Further, comprehending the COVID-19 phenomenon and the reasons behind the policies associated in the declaration of the different classifications of community quarantine helped the students deal better with the changes, disruptions and uncertainties brought about by the pandemic.

Understanding the plight and survival stories of the students could be of great help in crafting relevant response programs and policies that would make the psychological well- being of the Filipino learners sustained amid crisis situations. Kenneth Ginsburg said, "There is no simple answer to guarantee resilience in every situation. But we can challenge ourselves to help our children develop the ability to negotiate their own challenges and to be more resilient, more capable, and happier."

References

[1] Bowen, P., Rose, R. & Pilkington, A. (2017) MIXED METHODS-THEORY AND PRACTICE. SEQUENTIAL, EXPLANATORY APPROACH. European Centre for Research Training and Development UK (www.eajournals.org). International Journal of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods. Vol.5, No.2, pp.10-27

[2] Browning, M. H., Larson, L. R., Sharaievska, I., Rigolon, A., Mcanirlin, O., Mullenbach, L., . . . Alvarez, H. O. (2021). Psychological impacts from COVID-19 among university students: Risk factors across seven states in the United States. Plos One, 16(1). doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0245327

[3] Building your resilience. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience

[4] Cao, W., Fang, Z., Hou, G., Han, M., Xu, X., Dong, J., & Zheng, J. (2020). The psychological impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on college students in China. Psychiatry Research, 287, 112934.

[5] Cleofas, J. V. (2020). Life Interruptions, Learnings and Hopes among Filipino College Students during COVID-19

Pandemic. Journal of Loss and Trauma, 26(6), 552- 560. doi:10.1080/15325024.2020.1846443

[6] Creswell, J. (2014) Research Design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches 4th edition. SAGE Publishing, Inc.

[7] Hurley, K., Sood, A., Kilroy, D. S., Kraft, A., Rauf, D., Migala, J. Landau, M. D. (n.d.). What Is Resilience? Definition, Types, Building Resiliency, Benefits, and Resources: Everyday Health. Retrieved from https://www.everydayhealth.com/wellness/resilience/

[8] Jones, N. (2019).Improving Internet Access in the Philippines.San Francisco, CA: Asian Foundation.

[9] Khoshaim HB, Al-Sukayt A, Chinna K, Nurunnabi M, Sundarasen S, Kamaludin K, Baloch GM and Hossain SFA (2020) Anxiety Level of University Students During COVID- 19 in Saudi Arabia. Front. Psychiatry 11:579750. doi: 10.3389/fpsyt.2020.579750

[10] Miranda, J. O., & Cruz, R. N. C. (2020). Resilience mediates the relationship between optimism and well-being among Filipino university students. Current Psychology, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-020-00806-0.

[11] Petrie, C. (2020). Spotlight: Quality education for all during COVID-19 crisis (hundrEDResearch Report #01). United Nations. https://hundred.org/en/collections/qualityeducation-for-all-during-coronavirus

[12] Pokhrel, S., & Chhetri, R. (2021). A Literature Review on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching and Learning. Higher Education for the Future, 8(1), 133-141. doi:10.1177/2347631120983481

[13] Power, E., Hughes, S., Cotter, D., & Cannon, M. (2020). Youth mental health in the time of COVID-19. Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine, 32, 93–105.

[14] Pragholapati A. Covid-19 impact on students. EdArXiv [Preprint]. (2020). doi: 10.35542/osf.io/895ed

[15] Resilience Skills, Factors and Strategies of the Resilient Person. (2021, February 11). Retrieved from https://positivepsychology.com/resilience-skills/

[16] Son, C., Hegde, S., Smith, A., Wang, X., & Sasangohar, F. (2020). Effects of COVID-19 on College Students' Mental Health in the United States: Interview Survey Study. Journal of Medical Internet Research, 22(9). doi:10.2196/21279

[17] Student Resilience During Times of Crisis. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Student- Resilience-During-Times-of-Crisis.aspx

[18] Sun W, Wu M, Qu P, Lu C, Wang L. (2014). Psychological well-being of people living with HIV/AIDS under the new epidemic characteristics in China and the risk factors: a population-based study. Int J Infect Dis., 28:147–52. pmid:25281441

[19] Walsh, F. (2020). Loss and resilience in the time of COVID-19: Meaning making, hope, and transcendence. Family Process, 59(3), 898–911. https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12588

[20] Yang, C., Chen, A., & Chen, Y. (2021). College students' stress and health in the COVID- 19 pandemic: The role of academic workload, separation from school, and fears of contagion. Plos One, 16(2). doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0246676