



Students' Preferred Learning Modality

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Abstract:

The concept of preferred learning modalities among students gained significant attention in education. Understanding how students preferred to receive and process information could help educators tailor their instructional methods to enhance learning outcomes. Although there were a variety of instructional methods being implemented, modal preferences still received the most significant attention in both educational research and practical application. In this regard, to know the in-depth experiences of the subjects, Husserlian's Descriptive methodology was used in conducting an incidental interview of the students in Mandaue City College enrolled in A.Y. 2023 under the School of Education. The purpose of this study was to investigate the most commonly preferred learning modalities among students amidst the learning transition as well as the experiences that were being encountered. Moreover, this study aimed to explore the potential factors influencing their preferred learning mode. The possible reasons for exploring this could have been to identify ways to improve the current learning modalities and to enhance the overall learning experience for students. It could also have been to address any gaps or limitations in the current curriculum and to ensure that students were equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge for their future careers. And based on the results, the face-to-face mode of learning was more favorable than other modalities. The informants said that it was a more effective way of learning, as well as being more convenient and less financially pressured.

Keywords: Preferred, Learning Modality, Students

Introduction:

During the pandemic, online teaching replaced traditional classrooms, especially in colleges, requiring tailored approaches for each institution. Parents, teachers, and administration played crucial roles in online learning's impact on attendance and relationships among learners. Flexible learning guidelines were implemented due to COVID-19 to ensure continuous education. Mandaue City College adopted pure online and blended learning modalities, especially in the School of Education. Blended learning combined digital media with traditional teaching for flexibility. Students and teachers decided between synchronous (online) and asynchronous (offline) classes. Initially challenging, students gradually adapted. The study focused on School of Education students experiencing face-to-face, blended, and pure online learning.

Hence, this study explored the students' preferred learning modality and helped the students voice out concerns or opinions regarding the transition. Understanding students' preferred learning modalities could be beneficial for educators, as it could inform instructional strategies and improve the overall learning experience. It would also help the school administration determine the students' preferred learning modalities and could help create a diverse learning environment that accommodated various modalities, ensuring that all students had equal opportunities to succeed or making a possible recommendation to address the problem.

A Theoretical Stance

Throughout the entire duration of this research, the study decided to refrain from referencing theoretical frameworks or behavioral principles. This was generally done to support a lucid, unfiltered research treatment for the study's thematic analysis. While the study aimed to determine a specific behavior by examining phenomenological variation in that behavior, it was essential that the research not be biased by earlier studies to obtain first-hand data and draw conclusions. These were then used to develop a particular theoretical stance supporting the claims the study would produce. But since findings could not be predicted by nature, all possible assumptions that might have been assumed were also suspended. Unexamined beliefs were just as likely to be ignored in light of actual events as the study's findings. Additionally, the evaluation of pertinent literature and research was put on hold because the goal was to obtain a first-hand result without the help of earlier dissertations and articles.





The research was qualitative and used Husserlian's descriptive phenomenology to establish reliable philosophical and scientific knowledge. It was a standard to inquire about the student's preferred learning modality. This indicated that the researchers sought to produce findings that were both grounded in philosophical understanding and aligned with scientific rigor, ensuring the validity and credibility of the knowledge generated. Since it was inextricably linked to the participant's narratives about prior experiences with the different learning modalities, it was deemed to be qualitative. Descriptive phenomenology would be used in the study. Thus, themes would be developed near the conclusion of the study process (Goddard & Melville, 2004).

Research Method:

This study applied the qualitative methodology of Husserlian Descriptive Phenomenology. The most appropriate methodology for this research was a phenomenological research design as it aimed to determine students' preferred learning modalities from various perspectives. Phenomenological design was considered ideal for understanding how individuals made sense of their experiences (Kumar, 2018). The study chose this methodology to gain a deeper understanding of the addressed issues and to explore how participants expressed their views through responses regarding preferred learning modalities. By employing this methodology, the study aimed to set aside biases and preconceived ideas, focusing instead on participants' current knowledge. Thus, it sought to develop credible and accurate results through Husserlian descriptive phenomenology.

Findings and Discussion:

After conducting a thematic analysis of the qualitative data from respondents' answers to five open-ended questions regarding their experiences with three different learning modalities and their preferences, it appeared that students had mixed experiences with the various modalities. While some found traditional face-to-face classes more efficient for their learning, others encountered challenges with online and blended learning, such as internet connectivity issues and delayed submission of assignments. The most preferred modality, as suggested by the students for enhanced learning, was traditional face-to-face classes. This mode of learning provided a more immersive experience, allowing students to fully engage with their studies.

Theme 1. Different Modes, Different Challenges

Engaging in different modes, one can expect to encounter unique sets of difficulties or obstacles. Students share their experiences in different modes about the struggles they have faced in the transition of classes. Several difficulties they ran through when taking their programs online. These include social exclusion, sadness, inadequate Internet access, and an unsuitable home learning environment, which are made worse when students come from remote places and are stigmatized.

The transition to different modes of learning presents students with diverse challenges and obstacles. Research has highlighted the unique difficulties encountered by students as they navigate various learning modalities, particularly in the context of online education.

Social Exclusion and Isolation

One of the significant challenges reported by students in online learning is social exclusion and isolation (Dixon, 2010). The absence of face-to-face interactions and the reliance on virtual communication platforms can lead to feelings of loneliness and disconnectedness among students (Liu et al., 2020). Research indicates that social isolation can have detrimental effects on students' mental health and well-being, impacting their overall academic performance and motivation (Hodges et al., 2020).

Inadequate Internet Access and Technological Barriers

Another common difficulty faced by students in online learning is inadequate internet access and technological barriers (Di Pietro et al., 2020). Limited connectivity, unreliable internet service, and insufficient access to technological devices can hinder students' ability to participate in virtual classes, access course materials, and engage in online activities (Chen et al., 2021). These technological challenges disproportionately affect students from rural or low-income areas, exacerbating existing inequalities in educational access and attainment (Means et al., 2010).

Unsuitable Home Learning Environment

Students also encounter challenges related to the suitability of their home learning environments (Gill et al., 2021). Factors such as noise pollution, lack of privacy, and household responsibilities can disrupt students' concentration and focus, hindering their academic performance (Means et al., 2010). Moreover, students from remote areas may face additional challenges, such as limited access to educational resources and support services, further exacerbating the difficulties associated with online learning (Chen et al., 2021).

In the move towards online learning, students commonly face a myriad of obstacles. One prominent issue is social exclusion, where students may feel isolated or disconnected from their peers and instructors (Anderson & Dron, 2011). The absence of face-to-face interactions can lead to feelings of loneliness and a lack of social support, impacting students' overall well-being and academic performance (Liu et al., 2020).

Sub- Theme 1.1. Transition of Learning Modality

"When I was in my first year, we were face-to-face, then in the second semester, when COVID started, our class was blended learning. There are online and modular activities that the instructor will give. Then I tried Pure Online when I was in my third year, when all our classes were online". - Happy

Educational experience and how it has evolved due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the transition from face-to-face learning to blended learning and eventually to fully online classes. Research indicates that this transition has been accompanied by both challenges and opportunities for students. The move to blended learning, characterized by a combination of in-person and online instruction, requires students to adapt to new modes of learning and communication (Means et al., 2010).





Sub- Theme 1.2. Financial Pressure

"Online classes are more costly than face-to-face classes. In face-to-face classes we only spend on fares and little snacks and viand. Online you have to spend a lot on loads of data". -Grumpy

The potential financial challenges that students may face when transitioning to online classes. Online classes can be more expensive than face-to-face classes due to the additional costs associated with accessing and maintaining a reliable internet connection. Furthermore, the shift to online learning may entail additional expenses for technological devices, software subscriptions, and other learning materials, further exacerbating the financial strain on students (Di Pietro, 2010).

Sub- Theme 1.3. Technical Issues

"Another problem is a place where there is a better signal where I can have my class without noise around. In blended learning, I don't prefer this modality because sometimes I run out of load, so the submission of assignments is sometimes delayed. Sometimes the Microsoft Teams won't notify if their assignment because of the slowness of the signal". -Happy

Some challenges faced by the student in online or blended learning environments, specifically related to finding a suitable location with a strong and stable internet signal, dealing with load or data limitations, and experiencing issues with timely submission of assignments and communication platforms.

Sub- Theme 1.4. Experiences With Different Modalities

"In face to face, I also experienced difficulty because of the fare but I managed to find a way. While in online class you can join the class without taking a bath because your classmate and instructor cannot see you if you do not open the camera which is seldom to happen. Another advantage is no later because you can join the class real time and you can join even if you have other things to do." - Bashful

Students have encountered and interacted with various modes of learning or instructional formats. It implies that the student has firsthand experience with different approaches to education, such as face-to-face classes, online learning, blended learning, or a combination thereof. It indicates a range of experiences and perspectives gained from engaging with diverse educational modalities.

Face-to-face classes traditionally offer a structured learning environment characterized by in-person interactions between students and instructors. While this modality facilitates direct engagement and immediate feedback, students may encounter challenges related to transportation, such as the cost of commuting, as noted by the student (Ali, 2016). However, face-to-face interactions also foster a sense of community and belonging, promoting peer collaboration and social support networks (Anderson & Dron, 2011).

Sub- Theme 1.5. Ideal Learning Modalities

"If I will choose a modality that will be offered in school, it is face to face because the learning is really different in face to face compared to online class. You can see better if the child really understands or listens to the class." - Grumpy

According to an individual's perspective, there are specific modalities of instruction that are considered ideal or most effective for a particular learner or educational context. Which implies that different people may have varying preferences for what they consider to be the ideal way of learning, taking into account factors such as interaction with instructors, flexibility, accessibility, and overall learning outcomes.

Theme 2. Favored Modalities

Favored modalities can vary among individuals and contexts. Everyone has different learning preferences, and some student may prefer face-to-face, blended, or pure online classes. This could be based on personal experiences, learning styles, comfort levels, or perceived effectiveness. Knowing favored modalities can be helpful in choosing effective learning strategies and improving overall learning outcomes. Research has shown that students' preferred learning modalities can vary based on a multitude of factors, including personal experiences, learning styles, comfort levels, and perceived effectiveness (Gardner, 1983).

The preference for specific learning modalities varies widely among individuals and is influenced by various factors, including personal experiences, learning styles, comfort levels, and perceived effectiveness (Coffield et al., 2004). Understanding students' favored modalities is essential for educators and institutions to tailor learning experiences effectively and optimize learning outcomes.

Individual Learning Preferences

Research has shown that individuals have diverse learning preferences based on their unique cognitive and sensory processing abilities (Gardner, 1983). Some students may thrive in face-to-face settings, where direct interaction with instructors and peers facilitates learning, while others may prefer the flexibility and autonomy offered by online or blended modalities (Means et al., 2010).

Learning Styles

Learning styles, such as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic preferences, also play a significant role in shaping students' favored modalities (Felder & Silverman, 1988). Visual learners may prefer instructional materials that utilize diagrams, charts, and visual aids, while auditory learners may benefit





from lectures and audio recordings. Kinesthetic learners, on the other hand, may prefer hands-on activities and interactive simulations (Felder & Soloman, 1991).

Comfort Levels and Perceived Effectiveness

Students' comfort levels with different modalities and their perceptions of their effectiveness influence their preferences (Bernard et al., 2009). Some students may feel more comfortable and confident in face-to-face interactions, while others may find online or blended learning environments more conducive to their learning style and pace.

Sub- Theme 2.1. Direct Learning

I prefer face-to-face classes because I can interact and directly communicate with my classmates and instructor. Personally, I'm more visual, and just like what I said a while ago, it's really different to see the instructor presenting the lessons, and it's different to see your classmates and interacting with them personally, knowing also that all students have different levels of intelligence. -Bashful

Face-to-face classes are driven by their desire for direct communication and interaction with classmates and instructors, emphasizing the importance of visual learning and the unique benefits of observing the instructor's presentations and engaging with classmates on a personal level, while recognizing the diversity of intelligence levels among students.

Additionally, Bashful's testimonial underscores the importance of direct interaction and communication in face-to-face classes. Direct learning experiences, characterized by real-time engagement with instructors and peers, play a crucial role in facilitating deeper understanding and knowledge retention (Prince, 2004).

Sub- Theme 2.2. Learning Environment

"In face-to-face where I can see the instructor personally discussing and presenting the Lesson". - Dopey

Face-to-face learning where students have the opportunity to personally see and observe the instructor while they discuss and present the lesson. This direct visual interaction allows for a deeper connection and engagement with the material being taught.

Sub- Theme 2.3. Personal Preferences

"Of the three modalities, I prefer the face-to-face class because I can see the instructor and then the learning is really direct." -Sleepy

The individual preferences of learners regarding their favored modalities. It delves into factors such as learning style, comfort level, and personal experiences that influence their preference for specific modes of instruction. According to (Coffield et al., 2004), personal preferences, influenced by factors such as learning style, comfort level, and personal experiences, play a significant role in shaping students' choices regarding instructional modes.

Sub- Theme 2.4. Flexibility and Convenience

"Though online has a lot of challenges, I would still prefer online class because you can still attend the class wherever you are." - Bashful

It considers factors such as scheduling flexibility, the ability to access learning materials at any time and from any location, and the ease of balancing learning with other commitments. Modalities that provide flexibility and convenience are often preferred by students with busy schedules or specific constraints. Flexibility in scheduling, the ability to access learning materials from any location, and the opportunity to balance learning with other commitments are key factors influencing students' choices (Means et al., 2010).

Sub- Theme 2.5. Individual Learning Needs

"What I really experienced was that I had a hard time adjusting to the online class because it's hard to make money, I can't afford to buy load or data then sometimes there's no signal. In face-to-face class, I'm always late in my first class because of traffic. In blended and pure online I faced a hard time to learn and explore the use of technology." -Dopey

Focuses on how different modalities cater to the individual learning needs of learners. It considers factors such as learning pace, preferred learning style, and specific learning requirements. Modalities that can adapt to and accommodate individual learning needs are often preferred by students seeking a personalized learning experience. Educators must recognize and accommodate these diverse needs by providing support services, resources, and alternative learning pathways to ensure equitable access to education for all students (Ali, 2016).

Theme 3. Impact to the Academic Performance

The choice of learning modality can have an impact on a student's academic performance. This may be due to differences in learning environment, teacher engagement, availability of resources, social interaction with peers, and other factors. It highlights the recognition that external factors such as learning environment, teaching methods, access to resources, personal circumstances, and support systems can significantly influence a student's academic performance. Understanding and addressing these impacts are crucial in promoting and optimizing educational outcomes. Therefore, it is





important for students to choose the learning modality that best suits their needs and preferences to enhance academic performance. Additionally, recognizing these factors is crucial for understanding and addressing their effects on educational outcomes, underscoring the importance of aligning learning modalities with students' individual needs and preferences to optimize academic performance (Sottile, 2010).

The choice of learning modality significantly influences a student's academic performance, with various factors contributing to this impact. Research has shown that differences in learning environments, teacher engagement, availability of resources, social interaction with peers, and other external factors can significantly shape students' educational outcomes.

Learning Environment and Teacher Engagement

The learning environment plays a crucial role in student learning and academic achievement. Face-to-face classes provide direct interaction with instructors and peers, fostering engagement and collaboration (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In contrast, online classes may lack the same level of personal interaction, potentially impacting student motivation and participation (Dixon, 2010). Teacher engagement, including instructor support and feedback, also influences academic performance, with engaged teachers positively impacting student learning outcomes (Freeman et al., 2007).

Availability of Resources and Support Systems

Access to resources, such as textbooks, technology, and academic support services, is essential for student success. In face-to-face classes, students may have greater access to physical resources and immediate support from instructors and peers (Means et al., 2010). However, students in online or remote learning environments may face challenges accessing resources and receiving timely assistance, which can hinder their academic progress (Chen et al., 2021).

Social Interaction with Peers

Social interaction with peers is an integral part of the learning process, contributing to students' cognitive and social development (Vygotsky, 1978). Face-to-face classes facilitate peer interaction and collaboration, promoting active learning and knowledge sharing (Johnson et al., 2014). In contrast, online classes may limit opportunities for social interaction, potentially impacting students' engagement and sense of belonging (Hodges et al., 2020).

Sub - Theme 3.1. Realities of Cheating

"There are a lot of negative impacts in pure online and blended learning to the students. A huge possibility of cheating during examination unlike face-to-face class wherein the instructor could see and observe the students". -Grumpy

The potential negative impacts associated with pure online and blended learning, specifically, the increased possibility of cheating during examinations due to reduced monitoring compared to face-to-face classes where instructors can directly observe students. This insight underscores the need for effective strategies and technological solutions to maintain academic integrity in remote learning environments, ensuring fair assessment practices and upholding the value of education. Strategies to mitigate cheating include implementing robust proctoring solutions, designing authentic assessments, and fostering a culture of academic honesty through education and awareness initiatives (Lanier, 2018).

Sub – Theme 3.2. Distracted Learning

"Pure online has a lot of challenges such as internet connectivity, it is costly because you need to have a lot of data to attend the class, and more external interruptions such as neighborhood noise". - Sleepy

The challenges associated with pure online learning, including issues with internet connectivity, the cost of data consumption for attending classes, and external interruptions such as background noise from the neighborhood. These challenges can disrupt the learning experience, underscoring the need for reliable internet access, cost-effective data solutions, and creating conducive learning environments to mitigate external disturbances. Internet connectivity issues, the cost of data consumption, and external interruptions such as noise pollution can detract from students' focus and concentration, adversely affecting their academic performance (Watson et al., 2020).

Sub – Theme 3.3. Collaborative Learning

"Instructors have integrated activities that most especially those that have collaborative learning where we can share with our classmates the various ideas and opinions where we can learn from them as well. I can say that face-to-face learning is the effective mode of learning because I learned from it better. - Bashful

Collaborative learning in face-to-face classes involves students actively engaging in group activities and discussions to enhance their learning experience. It promotes teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills by fostering peer interaction and the exchange of diverse perspectives. Through collaborative learning, students can benefit from shared knowledge, increased engagement, and the opportunity to develop important social and communication skills. Collaborative learning involves students actively participating in group activities and discussions, facilitating the exchange of ideas, perspectives, and knowledge (Johnson et al., 2014). Research indicates that collaborative learning fosters teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills by encouraging peer interaction and collaboration (Slavin, 2014).

Sub – Theme 3.4. Engagement and Motivation

*"Face to face classes can lessen my stress because I can see my classmates and interact with them, I can also talk and laugh with my friends."
"In face to face you can directly interact with your instructor with no interruptions*





except for noises that can be manageable." - Happy

The influence of different modalities on student engagement and motivation. It considers factors such as student interest, active participation, and the degree of intrinsic motivation fostered by each modality. Those that promote higher levels of engagement and motivation tend to have a positive impact on academic performance. In face-to-face environments, students have the opportunity to interact with peers and instructors directly, fostering a sense of connection and community (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The immediacy of interpersonal interactions and the absence of technological distractions contribute to a conducive learning environment that enhances student engagement and reduces stress.

Sub-Theme 3.5. Assessment and Feedback

"In face to face you can interact with your classmates and instructor real time than in blended and online where there are some difficulties in communication." -Grumpy

In the impact of different modalities on assessment and feedback processes. It considers how well each modality allows for accurate and comprehensive assessment of student learning, timely feedback provision, and opportunities for self-assessment and reflection. Modalities that facilitate effective assessment and feedback can contribute to enhanced academic performance.

Conclusion:

The majority of respondents expressed a preference for traditional face to-face classes due to the opportunities it provides for direct interaction with teachers and fellow students, as well as the development of communication skills. It is important to acknowledge that individual preferences may vary and different modalities may work better for different learners. Some students encountered challenges with online and blended learning, such as connectivity issues and assignment submission delays. Educators should take student feedback into account and address these challenges when implementing different learning modalities. Traditional face-to-face classes were the most preferred modality, as they offer an immersive experience, immediate feedback, and personalized attention from instructors, which can enhance learning outcomes.

Limitations and Further Research:

Based on the research findings, it appears that most students prefer traditional face-to-face classes over blended learning and pure online classes. Some students cited concerns about distractions and engagement in online classes. It may be helpful for educators to consider these preferences and concerns when designing and delivering instructional content. Additionally, educators could explore ways to improve engagement and reduce distractions to better meet the needs of students who prefer these modalities. Furthermore, to improve the learning experience, one possible solution is to incorporate more interactive activities that encourage student engagement and participation.

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APPENDIX A - RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Interview Guide Question

The semi-structured interview questions are used for data gathering. The questions are used to determine the students' preferred learning modality. The validity of the questions is validated by three experts not related to the researcher. Validity refers to how accurately the findings among its participants reflect actual findings among people who are similar to those in the study's sample. A dry run of the questions on an alternative group of people not part of actual informants is conducted to check if the questions are indeed apt for gathering the needed data.

In answering the following questions below, the researchers ensure that the participants will understand why this study is conducted as their identity will remain anonymous and all the information they supply will be respected. The researchers also then guarantee that the answers collected will be confidential.

Guide Questions:

1. What preferred modalities have you encountered?
2. How was your experience in using these modalities?
3. What learning modality would you prefer?
4. What type of modality would you prefer that the school would offer?
5. What themes would lead to the development of learning modalities?





APPENDIX B - PLAGIARISM CHECK CERTIFICATION



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APPENDIX C - GRAMMAR CHECK CERTIFICATION



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