

Blended Learning Environment Affecting the Socio-Emotional Skills of the BEED Students

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ABSTRACT

The pandemic has impacted the global educational system, leading to the longest school closing that created a setback for the students and school institutions. Using a descriptive-correlational design, the researchers gathered the needed data to describe the level of blended learning environment and socio-emotional skills and explain the relationship between blended learning and socio-emotional skills. Random sampling was used to determine the sample size of the study. The adapted questionnaire was tested and was proven to be reliable. Moreover, the questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale that measured the following indicators: Independent Variable – performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions; Dependent Variable – psychological impact and social impact. Upon analysis of the data, it shows no significant relationship between the two variables. However, indicators such as social influence and social impact, facilitating conditions together with psychological impact and social impact show a significant relationship. The results explain how there was less interaction during the independent learning sessions. This finding correlates to the Engagement Theory, which emphasizes the need for students to collaborate with their peers to lessen the tendency of having communication lags. Engaging learners in their learning process through collaboration greatly helps their academic progression. To relate this to the theory of Site Ontology it supports the findings that if collaboration is always practiced and encouraged among students, the tendency of students being unable to express through their interpersonal skills will likely be avoided.

Keywords: blended learning, socio-emotional skills, education, BEED students, independent learning, collaboration

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has dramatically impacted the global educational system. The longest school closing created a setback for the students and school institution. The World Bank (2021) discusses that the disruption of the educational system over the last few years has already resulted in significant losses and a decline in educational quality. Hence, school closings affect children's overall well-being, development, and academic performance. In an article by Ortiz, Hincapie, & Paredes (2020), one of the effects that the pandemic has contributed is the threat to students' individual development, particularly their socio-emotional skills as well as their cognitive development, given the sudden shift in learning modality, which is now termed as the "Blended Learning". This threat has remained a prevalent problem aggravated by the shift to the new learning modality.

Tidmore (2018) states that using social skills successfully may lead to a high school performance and a positive educational outlook. Even so, some students struggle with socio-emotional development, which can have a variety of detrimental social repercussions. On the one hand, several students find online learning

helpful because it makes them more independent, and adjusting to rapid changes in the learning environment is simple. However, some students find it difficult to study in an asynchronous schedule because of distractions at home and a lack of interaction with their instructor (Idris, Zulkipli, Abdul-Mumin, Ahmad, Mitha, Rahman, Rajabalaya, David, & Naing, 2021).

On the contrary, the interaction made by the students, especially during the online mode of learning, is done through various media platforms like online classrooms, video conferencing, and messaging sites. In the study conducted by Zarzycka, Krasodomska, Maka, and Radwan (2021), some students find remote learning more effective since they have control over their learning, and some also find it helpful since the learning modality allows and gives them an ample amount of time to prepare. Moreover, the research finding suggests that when students collaborate using various platforms, they become more engaged, thus learning more effectively. In connection, one of the good sides of having a blended learning environment is that it allows the students to attain basic skills such as having “initiative, enthusiasm, and creativity” (Zheng, Ma, & Lin, 2021).

The study will utilize the theory proposed by Greg Kearsley and Ben Schneiderman, known as the Engagement Theory, which will serve as the backbone of the study. The theory is relevant in the current learning modality as it points to students being completely engaged in their learning even without the usual classroom setup, just that interaction or collaboration is present (Malik, 2021). This theory is similar to Lev Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory which emphasizes the human’s need to interact with others to be able to learn socially. Interacting with other people or the “more knowledgeable ones” to guide others and, simultaneously, learn (Instructional Design, 2021).

Another theory that will support the study is the social practice theory developed by Theodore Schatzki called Site Ontology. In an article by Loscher, Splitter, & Seidl (2019), site ontology refers to “all social phenomena rooted in practices”. Social phenomena refer to a particular happening in society that leads to people having this change in behavior (White, 2021). The theory talks about having a certain practice in a society that, when continuously practiced, people get used to doing such “activity” (Conquer Imagination, 2020). The theory is relevant in the context of education since it supports the notion that when a skill, for instance, the interpersonal skill of a student, is consistently practiced or done and when encouraged to speak, then the students’ interpersonal skills will most likely be enhanced.

The independent variable is the Blended Learning Environment, which will be measured through the indicators- Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Conditions. On the other hand, the dependent variable, Socio-Emotional Skills, is measured through the indicators: Psychological Impact and Social Impact. Psychological Impact is defined as the individual’s “emotional distress symptoms” such as anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress that the person had experienced, or it can be seen from the changes in their behavior (Chawla, Tom, & Sagar, 2021). Social Impact or “making a difference” refers to how a person improves their lives and how a person can improve them over a long time (Todd, 2021).

Various studies focused on different possible angles about the socio-emotional skills of the students affected by many factors. Most studies focus on how socio-emotional skills affect the well-being of students concerning their mental health; there are also some which focus on the elementary grade levels. This study is distinct from the other research since it dwells on how the blended learning environment affects the socio-emotional skills of college students taking up a Bachelor of Elementary Education at the University of Mindanao.

This study aims to determine the level of a Blended Learning Environment, which will be measured through the indicators- Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Conditions. It also aims to determine the level of Socio-Emotional Skills, which will be measured through the indicators:

Psychological Impact and Sociological Impact among the BEED students at the University of Mindanao. Furthermore, it also attempts to know the significant relationship between a blended learning environment and the socio-emotional skills of the respondents.

The study will discuss relevant facts regarding the shift to a different learning environment. Thus, it can be useful both at the global level and especially to the education sector at the national level to consider the future recommendations of the study that can help strengthen the policies of the said educational scheme. Furthermore, this study will also benefit the following: Teachers can use this study as a guide or reference on encouraging their students to engage their interpersonal skills by having a collaborative environment in the class. Students can also benefit from this study since it contains facts they can learn from and improve their socio-emotional skills. For future researchers, it can be used as an additional reference when conducting further research related to this study.

METHOD

Respondents

The research respondents of the study were 339 students taking Bachelor of Elementary Education enrolled in the University of Mindanao S.Y. 2022-2023. The respondents were selected through random sampling. As stated by Etikan and Bala (2017), the random sampling technique refers to randomly choosing a certain number of people from the total population to represent the group. Thus, according to Raosoft, it suggested a total of 181 respondents as the study's sample size. The inclusion criteria for the research respondents were BEED students who have experienced online classes under the blended learning modality. Only those who were under the new curriculum were included in participating. Thus, those not enrolled in the BEED course and under the old curriculum were excluded from responding to the survey.

Instruments

The research instrument employed in the study is an adapted questionnaire. The independent variable test items were adapted from the research study of Kurt and Tingoy (2017) entitled "The Acceptance and Use of a Virtual Learning Environment in Higher Education: An Empirical Study in Turkey and the U.K." with the following indicators: Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and the Facilitating Conditions. On the other hand, the adapted questionnaire used in the dependent variable was obtained from the study of Al Majali and Abiuhmaidan (2021) entitled "The Psychological and Social Effect of Distance Education from the Viewpoints of Student's Guardians" with Psychological Impact and Social Impact as its indicators.

Additionally, the items were tested using Cronbach's alpha, having scores of 0.928 for the independent variable and 0.939 for the dependent variable. The Cronbach alpha was interpreted as excellent since the value is higher than 0.70, proving the survey questionnaire's reliability. The instrument was a 29-item survey which will be answered using a 5-point Likert Scale with the following descriptive equivalent; (5) Strongly Agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, and (1) Strongly disagree. The range of means used to interpret the stance of the respondents regarding the blended learning environment and the socio-emotional skills are the following: 4.20-5.00, which is interpreted as Very High, which means that the statement is observed at all times; 3.40-4.19, interpreted as High which means that the statement is observed seven to nine times in ten situations; 2.60-3.39 interpreted as Moderate which means that the statement is neither observed; 1.80-2.59 interpreted as Low means that the statement is not observed seven to nine times in ten situations; and 1.00-1.79 interpreted as Very Low means that the statement is not observed at all.

Design and Procedure

Quantitative methodologies deal with numerical data and are measured through various statistical tools like

the frequency count (Thien & Gilliam, 2020). The study used a Descriptive Correlational design. According to Panda (2022), this method seeks to provide statistical representations of situations and explain the relationship between the two variables. Finally, in interpreting the data, the following statistical tools were utilized: *Mean* was used to describe the level of Blended Learning Environment and Socio-emotional skills of the BEED students at the University of Mindanao, and *Pearson-r* was used to determine the relationship between the Blended Learning Environment and the Socio-emotional Skills of the BEED students.

Furthermore, the following steps were done in the data collection process: The researchers submitted a permission letter to the Dean of the College of Teacher Education to conduct the study. After the approval, the researchers proposed a research title that adheres to the university’s research agenda. Then, the researchers proceeded with the title defense. When the research title was accepted, the researchers moved to write the introduction and methods and test the reliability of the adapted questionnaires through pilot testing. After the survey questionnaires were proven reliable, the researchers wrote a letter of permission to conduct the data collection process to the Dean of the College of Teacher Education and the respondents. Since the target respondents of the study were BEED students, the researchers will ensure the confidentiality of the respondent’s identity and information given. Due to the school’s pandemic protocols, the researchers collected data through online and face-to-face surveys. The researchers used online platforms like Google Forms and Messenger to acquire the data needed for the study. Also, survey forms were given for the face-to-face data collection process. After collecting the needed data, the researchers tallied, analyzed, and interpreted it with the assistance of the statistician assigned to them. The data was carefully tallied using the Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Blended Learning Environment

Table 1 shows all the indicators of the independent variable with an overall mean of 4.16 and a standard deviation of .493 which is interpreted as high. The indicator with the Very High interpretation is Social Influence, with a mean of 4.31, which states how students are supported by their school and lecturers in adopting blended learning education. President Marcos has entrusted the implementation of the blended learning modality to the education secretary, Vice-President Sara Duterte, which emphasized that DepEd will be doing its part in “preparing and planning” for the blended learning modality (Patag, 2022). Part of the Department of Education’s plan was implementing the full face-to-face classes on November 2, 2022. But they have released DepEd Order No. 44, which allows private schools to have discretion over implementing blended learning or full face-to-face (Bautista, 2022). Additionally, the reason for such is to consider the funding spent by schools in supporting the online mode of learning (e.g., technologies, LMS, and other online resources).

Table 1. Level of Blended Learning Environment

Indicators	Mean	SD
Performance Expectancy	4.06	.680
Effort Expectancy	4.17	.752
Social Influence	4.31	.531
Facilitating Conditions	4.11	.675
Overall	4.16	.493

As a result of the strong implementation of the blended learning modality, various guidelines have been

established to promote the safe back-to-school of students. In an article by Camella (2021) entitled “Face-to-face classes guidelines this pandemic,” DepEd and DOH developed safety standards to protect the children’s safety in the reopening of educational institutions. One is to require all staff members who will closely interact with the pupils to be completely immunized. Czar Carlito Galvez Jr. supported the National Vaccination Operation Cluster to urge the Local Government Units (LGUs) to expedite the vaccination of public and private school teachers. The teacher’s primary responsibility in reopening schools is to ensure a safe and healthy environment for the children and make amends for the knowledge and skills that were missed during distance learning.

Additionally, reports regarding the Learner Information System in November revealed that enrollment increased by 4% from 26.2 million to 27.2 million for the school year 2021-2022. The agency called it “a strong showing of trust” by pupils and their families in DepEd’s ability to provide educational alternatives during the epidemic. UNICEF has given the Department of Education a rating of five stars throughout every aspect of basic education over the nation’s preparedness for providing online educational programs as a response to the recent school closings (Montemayor, 2021).

Level of Socio-Emotional Skills

Table 2 shows the two indicators of the Socio-Emotional Skills variable with an overall mean of 3.58 which is interpreted as high. Both indicators are interpreted as high, with statements about how the learning modality has affected their personal development, particularly in their socio-emotional skills as a person and student. In closer lens, Psychological Impact with a mean of 3.57 shows that students under the blended learning modality struggle to simultaneously handle their mindset and emotions. This was drawn from the following statements: “I feel worried about my future.”, “BLE has created a state of anxiety that affected my life.” and “I feel sad because of BLE.”.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness California (2020) highlights New York Times article entitled “In a World ‘So Upside Down’, the Virus Is Taking a Toll on Young People’s Mental Health,” which tackles how adolescents are most likely to experience mental illness as a part of them maturing. They highlighted in the article how this was worsened by “the shutting” down of several educational institutions and led to more intimate or private moments with themselves, thus, more tendency to be dealing with their mental issues, which might end up in depression. Considering the “unusual” environment for learning might have caused or worsened students’ tendency to feel pressured in catching up and adjusting to the scheme as well.

Table 2. Level of Socio-Emotional Skills

Indicators	Mean	SD
Psychological Impact	3.57	.817
Social Impact	3.59	.644
Overall	3.58	.674

The social impact indicator having a mean of 3.59 which is interpreted as high, shows that BEED students from the University of Mindanao have encountered less social interaction, especially in asynchronous sessions, given that they are on their own and are doing independent academic tasks. This implication is drawn from the following statements of the dependent variable: “I have become less active than before.”, “My use of social media has increased.”, “I got busier with social media activities or video games.”, and “I leave the house a little while.”. To support this finding, the Engagement Theory by Greg Kearsley and Ben Schneiderman suggests promoting collaboration among students to engage them in their learning. Connecting this to Theodore Schatzki’s Site Ontology, when collaboration is always present, this will lead

to a lesser tendency of developing a lag in terms of interpersonal skills.

A study entitled “Lack of Social Interaction in Online Classes During COVID-19” suggests that the social interaction of the students greatly impacts their academic performance and that online classes (asynchronous sessions) root for the lesser interaction among students (Azmat & Ahmad, 2022). Since most schools have an outcome-based curriculum that focuses on the students acquiring skills rather than testing students’ knowledge through assessments (Philstar, 2017), given in the blended learning modality, students find it hard to be mastering the sets of skills expected from them since they are learning independently. This explains the findings of the data gathered where a high interpretation was drawn, which translates to the agreeability of the respondents to the Impact of the blended learning modality, which is less social interaction.

Correlation of Blended Learning Environment and Socio-Emotional Skills

Table 3 shows the correlation coefficient of the two variables. The independent variable, Blended Learning Environment, has four indicators: Performace Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Conditions. The dependent variable, Socio-Emotional Skills, has two indicators: Psychological Impact and Social Impact. The r-value of .026 is obtained from the performance expectancy and psychological impact indicators; social impact and performance expectancy have an r-value of .063 which signifies no significant relationship.

Table 3. Correlation of Blended Learning Environment *and Socio-Emotional Skills*

Blended Learning Environment	Socio-Emotional Skills		
	Psychological Impact	Social Impact	Overall
Performance Expectancy	.026	.063	.038
Effort Expectancy	.054	.126	.070
Social Influence	.130	.211**	.172*
Facilitating Conditions	.181*	.144*	.166*
Overall	.125	.169*	.138

Moreover, the effort expectancy and psychological Impact have an r-value of .054; effort expectancy and social Impact have an r-value of .126; social influence and psychological Impact have an r-value of .130, which shows no significant relationship.

In contrast, the r-value of social influence and social Impact is .211, which shows a significant relationship. In a study by Santiago, Ulanday, Centeno, Bayla, & Callanta (2021), it suggests on how there should be balance in making sure that schools can provide the relevant resources in the adoption of the new learning modality as well as ensure that these technologies can support the engagement of the students. Additionally, when the socio-emotional aspect is being catered then it will lead to a more desirable effect on the students. The social and emotional learning aims to provide a “welcoming environment” among the students especially in the blended learning modality (Evans, 2021). Such strategy paves way for students to have the sense of belongingness which leads them to feel efficient as a student.

Furthermore, the r-value for the facilitating conditions and the psychological impact is .181, which shows a

significant relationship. It explains that even when students have acquired the needed resources to access the blended learning education it eventually leads to it taking a toll on the mental state of every student. A study shows that 78% of students agree that during the said modality, students are likely to exert more labor in trying to understand their academic task (Azmi, Khan, & Azmi, 2022). With this, a sense of loneliness is felt by the students given the shift from being in a classroom setting where peers and teachers are physically seen and interaction is live, to facing the gadgets and doing the tasks alone (Hansen-Brown, Sullivan, Jacobson, Holt, & Donovan, 2022).

Meanwhile, the facilitating conditions and social impact have an r-value of .144, which shows a significant relationship. Both indicators bring students to becoming technologically literate people. In a news article by Manila Bulletin (2023), technology or digital literacy is an essential skill that Filipinos must have especially the “young” ones. Although for most parts, it is ideal for a person living in these ages to be such, the downside of it is having less time for personal development (Anderson & Rainie, 2018). Finally, the overall correlation coefficient is .138, which shows no significant relationship thus, failed to reject the null hypothesis.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The new learning modality has truly impacted learners in many ways. It has impacted their academic performance, study habits, and life. The findings gathered from the study have shown no significant relationship between the blended learning environment and the socio-emotional skills of the BEED students at the University of Mindanao. The level of blended learning environment suggests a high overall mean rating with the indicator- social influence interpreted as very high. This shows that BEED students from the University of Mindanao highly agree that the school has provided them with resources like effective instructors and materials for accessing school tasks. Shifting to the said modality would never be easy if the school is not able to establish policies or a system on how blended learning will be actuated.

On the other hand, the level of socio-emotional skills shows a high overall mean rating. Both of its indicators, Psychological Impact and Social Impact, have a high mean interpretation. The result shows that BEED students agree that their socio-emotional skills were affected by how they have developed personally and as a student. Particularly on the psychological impact indicator, which has statements like “I feel worried about my future.”, “BLE has created a state of anxiety that affected my life.” and “I feel sad because of BLE.”. Meanwhile, the social impact indicator shows that independent learning sessions have caused them to interact less with their co-students. This is drawn from the following statements: “I have become less active than before.”, “My use of social media has increased.”, “I got busier with social media activities or video games.”, and “I leave the house a little while.”.

This finding supports the Engagement Theory, which emphasizes the need for students to collaborate with their peers to lessen the tendency of having communication lags. Engaging learners in their learning process through collaboration greatly helps their academic progression. Also, the Site Ontology theory supports the study’s findings that if collaboration is always practiced and encouraged among students, problems in expressing through their interpersonal skills will likely be avoided.

Thus, the researchers thought of the following recommendations to elaborate on the benefit of this study to society. First, the researchers recommend this study to the teachers. The study’s findings and the theory utilized will open them to think of teaching strategies like discussion boards or LMS Forums, especially during the asynchronous sessions. Teachers can promote and maintain collaboration among students to enhance and engage their interpersonal skills by reacting to the forum posts of their classmates and sharing their thoughts on the said discussion post. This will lead to them becoming effective teachers delivering the lesson contents without compromising the quality of education upheld by the institution.

Second, the researchers recommend this study to the CTE-CSG and the other student body government in the university or school organizations. The findings of the study may serve as their source of data to aid the need to conduct forums, seminars, or webinars tackling different ways of coping with stress and anxiety over academic tasks, especially in the current learning modality. This way, they can assist their co-students in the organization.

And lastly, future researchers, to use this study as a reference and delve into a deeper context, like focusing on one of the indicators used from either of the two variables or exploring other teaching strategies in promoting the socio-emotional skills under the blended learning modality. Also, researchers may focus on investigating the long-term effects of blended learning on students' well-being and academic performance.

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