

Lived Experiences of Senior High School Students Under Modular Learning in English Subject

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 Pandemic brought a major change in the Philippine educational system and resulted to the shift of learning modality from in-person learning to distance learning. Ensuring the continuity of education, modular distance learning was implemented in the Philippines. This study explored the lived experiences of the senior high school students in Laguindingan National High School during the school year 2021-2022 under modular learning in English subject. Its primary purpose was to find out the difficulties encountered by the students and their ways of coping with these difficulties. These experiences were identified through a qualitative approach by conducting an online survey involving 60 participants who were selected through random sampling; 30 students from 11 HUMSS A and 30 students from 12 HUMSS A. Thematic analysis was used in coding and analyzing the data. The main difficulties that emerged in this study were students' difficulty in understanding the lessons and activities; lack of discussion from teachers; insufficient time in answering the modules and poor connectivity. The study also revealed the coping strategies including time management; asking supervision from their teachers; relying on gadget and Internet and seeking family support. These difficulties inverted modular learning into a complex experience for students. Coping strategies involving time management, teacher supervision and family support addressed their difficulties in understanding the lessons and having insufficient time answering the activities. With this, it is encouraged that students and parents should have an open communication and come up with schedules to make sure that students can maintain balance between their studies and household responsibilities. Poor connectivity remained a problem which negated the effectiveness of relying on gadgets and internet. It is recommended that students should be given load assistance to assist them with their problem on poor connectivity. This may be done through an issuance of a loaded sim-card to the students. Additionally, teachers may also employ home visitation to scaffold students with difficulty catching up with the lessons. The result of the study may serve as a ground for the improvement of the existing guidelines and programs on the implementation of modular learning.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, coping strategies, lived experiences, modular learning, English subject

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought major changes in the history of Education system. The Pandemic has affected the largest population of learners. The crisis frightens the learners because of the fact that they need to be exposed with people if in-person teaching learning modality is applied in the succeeding school years. Education experts have come up with some innovations to address the issue the Philippine Education System is facing.

Consequently Pokhrel & Chheri (2019), noted that:

The Department of Education has implemented the Distance Learning Modalities (DLDM) as an alternative to the in-person modality to ensure the continuity of learning amidst the pandemic (Pokhrel & Chheri, 2019).

Distance Learning refers to a learning delivery modality where learning takes place between the teacher and the learners who are geographically separated during instruction. This modality has three types: Modular Distance Learning (MDL), Online Distance Learning (ODL), and TV/Radio-Based Instruction. Among the three types of distance learning, the Philippines has adopted the Modular Distance Learning (Llego, 2020).

Modular Distance Learning is an individualized instruction that allows learners to use printed self-learning modules (SLMs) or digital format/electronic copy, whichever is applicable in the context of the learner, and other learning resources like Learner's Materials, textbooks, activity sheets, study guides and other study materials. The teacher takes the responsibility of monitoring the progress of the learners. The learners may ask assistance from the teacher through e-mail, telephone, text message/instant messaging, etc. If possible, the teacher has to do home visitation in order to remediate and monitor the learning of the students (Llego, 2020).

This study aimed at exploring the learning experiences of the Senior High School Students during distance learning using Thematic Analysis.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Research Design

This study followed a qualitative research design. With the endeavor of exploring the experiences of Senior High School Students under Modular Learning in English Subject, this design is suited to this study as it allowed the researcher to understand and explain this certain phenomenon. Qualitative research involves the use of qualitative data, such as interviews, documents, and participant observation data. Qualitative researchers can be found in many disciplines and fields, using a variety of approaches, methods and techniques (Brannan et al, 2022).

Subject of the study

The respondents of the study were the Senior High School students of Laguindingan National High School enrolled during the school year 2020-2021. The study had a total number of 60 respondents. 30 of them came from Grade 11 HUMSS A with a class size of 40 and the other remaining 30 were the students from the Grade 12 HUMSS A with a class size of 41.

Laguindingan National High School is located at Zone 3 Poblacion Laguindingan Misamis Oriental. It is a competitive school in terms of implementation of rules, beautification, academics as well as sports and etc. that develop a quality education for the students. It is one of the established secondary schools in the province of Misamis Oriental.

Sampling Procedure

The researcher used simple random sampling. It is a type of sampling technique in which the researcher selected a number of students from a class to be the part of the study. For the selection of respondents from Grade 11 and Grade 12 level, the above-mentioned sampling procedure was performed.

Instrument

The data were gathered through a survey, particularly by using questionnaire adapted from Dangle and Sumaoang (2020). The adapted questionnaire consisted of seven questions and the followup questions in each item were added to allow the respondents to narrate their experiences. The survey was scheduled prior to its actual conduct. Emails, Google forms and social media were used in the distribution of questionnaires and retrieval of data.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a flexible approach to qualitative analysis that enables researchers to generate new insights and concepts derived from data. The researcher employed thematic approach in analyzing data. Thematic analysis emphasizes pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns (themes) within data. Firstly, the researcher came into the data and noted the important details of the data. Secondly, the researcher listed the recurring themes from the data gathered. Lastly, the researcher selected the final themes needed for the data analysis. The thematic analysis was helpful for the researcher in clustering the data from the survey and in labeling them with themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section represents the result and analysis of the data obtained in the questionnaire used in the online survey of this study.

The tables 1-4 show the emerging themes in terms of the difficulties encountered and tables 5-8 show the emerging themes in terms of the coping strategies obtained from the responses of the respondents to the questions in the survey questionnaire conducted through an online survey. Furthermore, there are discussions provided below each table.

Difficulty of lessons and activities

This section presents the table and discussion of the difficulty of understanding the lessons and activities that students encounter in modular learning.

Table I Difficulty of Lessons and Activities

Theme	Responses
<p>Poor Comprehension</p>	<p>"There are lessons that I don't know how to answer".</p> <p>"I cannot understand many questions".</p> <p>"Some questions I cannot understand and sometimes pictures are blurred".</p> <p>"Sometimes I encounter difficult questions and activities that I cannot easily understand".</p> <p>"Sometimes there are parts I cannot understand".</p> <p>"It is difficult to understand the lesson".</p> <p>"I cannot understand some topic".</p> <p>"I don't know the other lessons".</p> <p>"There are hard questions".</p> <p>"There are lessons that are difficult".</p> <p>"I don't understand some lessons".</p> <p>"Some topics are unfamiliar so I don't know how to answer".</p>

	<p>"It is not easy to deal with this learning especially when I cannot understand the lesson well."</p> <p>"It (the lessons) is difficult to understand".</p>
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Poor comprehension. Respondents cited that they have difficulty in understanding the lessons and activities in the modules. In the prior study conducted by Dangle and Sumaoang in 2020, it was revealed that the subjects that respondents are having greatest difficulty with are Mathematics, followed by History, Entrepreneurship and Applied Economics. However, the present study showed that the respondents are having difficulty in answering modules in English subject that did not appear in the above-mentioned study. This difficulty is due to the reason that learners have different learning styles that is supported by the Multiple Intelligence Theory of Howard Gardner. The theory suggests that there are eight ways the students learn: visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, musical-rhythmic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic and bodily kinesthetic. In the case of modular learning which involves a lot of reading, learners who hardly learn through reading will most likely going to find learning the lessons and activities in their modules difficult.

"It is difficult to understand the lesson".

"Sometimes I encounter difficult questions and activities that I cannot easily understand".

It is evident that the difficulty of the respondents in understanding the lessons is rooted from their inability to comprehend the language used in the modules.

Language is the only means to communicate freely, so if students are having an issue understanding the language used in the academic process it becomes a big challenge to them and they will eventually start thinking about it. Once this happens they become frustrated and stressed up when even they have communicated and at the long run affects their performance. A lot of students get frustrated when they don't understand what the teachers in class are teaching. Some also misinterpret what the teacher said in a different way or meaning. This frustration leads to students being stressed up because they wonder how they will pass the course because they hardly get what the teachers say in class (Essel & Owusu, 2017). In the context of modular learning, students do not understand what is in their modules.

Learning Alone

This section presents the table and discussion of the difficulty that students encounter in modular learning due to independent learning.

Table II Learning Alone

Theme	Responses
	<p>"I don't understand every lesson".</p> <p>"Sometimes there are lessons that are quite difficult to analyze on my own so I'll have to understand it again and again".</p> <p>"I cannot understand other lessons by myself".</p> <p>"I need a teacher that explains the topic".</p> <p>"It is better to study with our teacher to teach us".</p> <p>"Lack of teacher's guidance".</p>

Lack of discussion from teachers	<p>"It is hard to understand the lesson by yourself without the guidance of teacher"</p> <p>"No one really teaches us "</p> <p>"I am having a hard time in understanding the modules when there is no explanation from teachers".</p> <p>"There is no discussion".</p> <p>"No one would explain it (the lesson) to me".</p> <p>"We study alone without the teacher to discuss".</p> <p>"It is difficult to understand (the lesson) without teacher's guidance".</p>
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Lack of discussion from teachers. The respondents claimed that due to the lack of discussion from the teachers, it is hard for them to learn the lessons in the modules and answer the activities.

"I cannot understand other lessons by myself".

"I am having a hard time in understanding the modules when there is no explanation from teachers".

The obtained results confirmed that lack of interaction to their teachers makes learning difficult for the students in a modular learning environment. This data can be supported by the previous studies which imply that social interaction in the academic context can be of relevance for students' learning and motivation, both in the pre-pandemic time and during the pandemic (e.g., Boling et al. 2012; Hafiz 2017; Hurst et al. 2013; Marler et al. 2021; Yeager et al. 2013).

Another studies with focus on pandemic-related effects on students' lives and different aspects of their academic functioning also emphasize that a lack of social interactions in an academic context (and generally) is a possible source of students' stress and can affect their everyday life functioning, including academic functioning and worrying about their academic assignments (e.g., Chaturvedi et al. 2021; Schiff et al. 2020), and the results obtained in this study also support these findings.

"It is better to study with our teacher to teach us".

"It is difficult to understand (the lesson) without teacher's guidance".

The lack of presence from the teachers is really a challenge in distance learning not only in the context of Philippine education. A foreign study of Musingafi et al. (2015) on distance learning conducted in Zimbabwe Open University revealed that seventy percent of the students thought that lack of instructor's contact and /or inadequate academic support was a challenge.

Distraction of Duties

This table presents the difficulty of the respondents in distance learning and in answering module in English subject due to the interference of duties at home.

Table III Distraction of Duties

Theme	Responses
	"Lack of time to answer my module".

Time constraint	<p>"I don't have enough time to answer this (module)".</p> <p>"Time management hits me hard".</p> <p>"I can't focus on answering module due to household responsibilities".</p> <p>"I have my own family to take care with a 4-month old baby and live-in partner".</p> <p>"I have my own family with a one-year-old child".</p> <p>"I am a working student and I answer my module only when I am home".</p> <p>"My difficulty is because of household chores".</p> <p>"I have a lot of work at home".</p> <p>"Household chores consume most of my time in morning to afternoon".</p> <p>"There are a lot of household responsibilities for me to finish everyday".</p> <p>"I am a working student. Too much modules".</p>
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Time constraint. The respondents claimed that lack of time is one major problem in modular learning. This difficulty is also present in the foreign study conducted in Zimbabwe Open University. This study revealed that there are several challenges faced by ZOU students. The challenges include individual, instructional and institutional related challenges. Individual related challenges were found to be lack of sufficient time for study. This means that the lack of time is not just a problem of the students in Philippine context but as well as students from other countries under distance education.

"I can't focus on answering module due to household responsibilities".

Due to household chores, the respondents experienced difficulty in giving time for answering their module. This finding backed the study of Phinney and Haas (2003) as cited by Essel and Owusu (2017) which found that having domestic responsibilities and responsibilities related to holding a job while in school are among the sources of stress for most students. Domestic responsibilities are the responsibilities the students have at home such as household chores.

"I am a working student and answer my module only when I am home".

"I am a working student. Too much modules".

This finding revealed that some respondents are working students and are having difficulty in balancing their jobs and studies. This is also congruent with the results on the study of Young (2017) where he reported that those students who worked for 6 hours per week have higher stress level as compared to those who don't. Essel and Owusu (2017) also observed that responsibilities whether domestic correlated to holding a job while in school will certainly compound to a heavy academic load which is bound to result in stress.

Technological and Technical Difficulties

This table presents the difficulty of the respondents in distance learning and in answering module in English subject due to technical difficulties.

Table IV Technological and Technical Difficulties

Theme	Responses
Poor Connectivity	<p>"My place has a poor signal"</p> <p>"I have no internet connection".</p> <p>"It (lessons) is difficult because of internet connection".</p> <p>"I have an unstable internet connection".</p> <p>"This (lessons) is difficult because of data connection".</p>

Connectivity. Respondents cited poor connectivity as one of their difficulties in modular distance learning. According to a study released by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), bad Internet connection is a more pressing problem in the Philippines compared to poverty and corruption (Ordinario, 2017).

"My place has a poor signal"

"I have an unstable internet connection".

According to the Akamai State of Internet Report for the 2nd Quarter 2016, the Philippines ranks at 6th out of 15 Asia-Pacific countries with an average mobile internet speed of 8.5 Mbps, (Department of Information and Communications Technology, 2017). The report shows that the Philippines is still way behind in terms of internet connectivity.

"It (lessons) is difficult because of internet connection".

Some respondents rely on their gadgets to search additional information regarding their lessons, however despite having gadgets, they still struggle with having a good Internet connection. This conforms to the survey of DepEd as cited by Santos (2020) mentioning that 2.8 million students have no way of going online especially in rural areas where internet access and speed is a challenge.

Self-Discipline

This table presents the way respondents cope with the difficulties in distance learning and answering modules in English subject through self-discipline.

Table V Self-Discipline

Theme	Responses
	<p>"Stay focus and do it one at a time"</p> <p>"I've done that (module) by disciplining myself to not procrastinate and to set schedule when to answer my module".</p> <p>"I set some schedule for each module to finish early".</p> <p>"I have managed my time by having a schedule".</p>

<p>Time Management</p>	<p>"I used to have a to-do-list or scheduling method to answer my module".</p> <p>"I have time management to answer my module".</p> <p>"I finish my household chores then answer my module".</p> <p>"I properly managed my time".</p> <p>"I manage my time to answer my module in the morning and afternoon".</p> <p>"I set priority list".</p> <p>"I balance my time to do modes and other things".</p> <p>"I manage my responsibilities as a student".</p> <p>"I divide my time on how many hours to spend every activity that I need to do".</p> <p>"Having a to-do-list notebook is an essential for me and with this I can have a list if works that I must finish at the end of the week then arrange/label it according to their importance".</p> <p>"I always manage my time on when I must answer and when I do household chores".</p> <p>"I manage my time. I do the chores first and that I will start answering module".</p> <p>"I have my schedules on each/subject to answer module".</p> <p>"I manage it through separating what's the most important matters "</p>
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Time management. This coping mechanism employed by the students refers to the way they schedule answering their modules and doing household chores.

"I used to have a to-do-list or scheduling method to answer my module".

"I always manage my time on when I must answer and when I do household chores"

"I properly managed my time".

Based on the responses, it is evident that managing one's time is effective in coping with the struggles of modular distance learning. Having time management has given students satisfaction in finishing their modules on time.

This result is in line with the results of Hearon's (2015) study where she studied the stress and coping strategies of High School students in Accelerated Academic Curricula and its relationships with students' success. She found that the students who employed time and task management to cope with stress were more likely to experience higher academic achievement as compared to those who don't. Misra & McKean (2000, in Young, 2017) recommended that students should develop time management skills to help reduce the stress of work. When students have perceived control of their time, they have less stress. Students can use planners, calendars, reminders, and to-do lists to help manage their time. Students should plan their time commitments each week and prioritize what needs to be accomplished. These techniques and skills can help students manage their time more effectively and help them have more control over their time.

"I manage it through separating what's the most important matters "

"I manage my time. I do the chores first and that I will start answering module".

Managing one's time ineffectively can often be a source of stress. Individuals can be taught to look at what has to be accomplished in a day, or a week, and find efficient ways of working so that they are not constantly backpedaling and thereby wasting time. Establishing priorities and working to these is an effective way of managing one's time. Moreover, almost college students had the same pattern of encountering related problems (Gittens, 2007, in Guevarra, 2017).

Academic Supervision

This table presents the way respondents cope with the difficulties in distance learning and answering modules in English subject through virtual supervision of teachers.

Table VI Academic Supervision

Theme	Responses
<p>Responsiveness of the teacher</p>	<p>"They send instructions on our Group Chat".</p> <p>"They reply to our messages".</p> <p>"Our teacher is updating us about school works".</p> <p>"Our teacher helps us learn through Google meet even if it is modular".</p> <p>"They encourage all the students".</p> <p>"He/she (teacher) helps me with our lesson and to learn more through Google meet/messenger".</p> <p>"They assist me when I have difficult in my module through chat".</p> <p>"Sometimes they use Google meet to explain something in our module".</p> <p>"Even busy they respond to our messages".</p> <p>"They always update us".</p> <p>"Responding to my questions directly and politely".</p> <p>"They provide instructions in our Group Chat".</p> <p>"Through our Group chat or direct message, I can approach them (teachers) and have a reply afterwards".</p> <p>"They (teachers) always chat in our Group Chat and they always answer our questions when we message them".</p> <p>"They respond if I have questions regarding our lessons".</p> <p>"When I ask her questions she (teacher) always replies".</p> <p>"My teachers always update us".</p>

Responsiveness of the teachers. From the responses of the respondents, it is clear that they reach out to their teachers when they have difficulty in answering their modules.

"They always update us".

"When I ask her questions she (teacher) always replies".

"They respond if I have questions regarding our lesson".

These data suggest that responsiveness of the teachers is crucial for the students in a work-from-home arrangement. This can be supported by the claim of Butron (2021) where he said that teachers are one of the keys to the effective implementation of the curriculum. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers' role has expanded and drastically changed from classroom-based teaching and learning to a virtual learning environment. These changes have affected teachers' physical, mental and emotional responses in performing their duties and responsibilities. The outcomes of the teaching and learning processes are influenced by the redefining of teachers' multifaceted roles.

He further said that to ensure that teachers are efficiently and effectively doing their tasks without close supervision, there must be constant communication with the school head and teachers. Teachers must be responsive to the communications coming from the school and report their accomplished tasks.

Technical Support

This table presents the way respondents cope with the difficulties in distance learning and answering modules in English subject through internet surfing.

Table VII Technical Support

Theme	Responses
<p>Reliance on gadget and Internet</p>	<p>"If I cannot understand I search it in Google".</p> <p>"Some questions I cannot understand I search it in Google".</p> <p>"I research some of it".</p> <p>"I need to search to get an answer".</p> <p>"I need gadget for research".</p> <p>"I do research to gather more explanation and examples".</p> <p>"I need gadgets if I don't understand something I can just search in Google or YouTube".</p> <p>"I need gadgets to search some ideas".</p> <p>"I need to search to understand".</p> <p>"I need gadgets to search some ideas".</p> <p>"I use gadgets to understand the activities of my module".</p> <p>"I do some research with the topic that is not familiar".</p> <p>"It (gadget) helped me to access internet and being connected to teachers and friends (brainstorming)".</p> <p>" When we use gadgets and do research it (answering module) will become more easy".</p> <p>"Mobile phone helps me a lot to answer my module well for translation and to get ideas about the lesson".</p>

	<p>"Some activities are difficult so we need to have gadgets".</p> <p>"I have my phone that I use for research if I cannot understand well the concept of the lessons".</p> <p>"The gadgets are so important all students today".</p> <p>"There are some lessons that I did not know so I need to use gadgets to understand more on that lesson".</p>
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Reliance on gadget and Internet. It can be inferred from these findings that, the distance learning students of the Laguindingan National High School find it easy to use a smart phone in their learning activities.

"I do research to gather more explanation and examples".

"I do some research with the topic that is not familiar".

"I have my phone that I use for research if I cannot understand well the concept of the lessons"

Through these responses, it is clear that the students rely on their gadgets in finding additional information regarding their lessons from the Internet. This reliance makes it easy for them to answer their modules because of the availability of needed information in the Internet. These findings support the works of Iqbal and Bhatti (2015) in which it was revealed that majority of the respondents finds it easy to use a smart phone which also enhance their perceived usefulness of using a smart phone for learning activities. However, the findings are inconsistent with the works of Ifeanyi and Chukwuere (2018) in which it was found that majority of the respondents responded in affirmative that sometimes they find it a daunting task accessing academic material on their smart phones, likewise same perception was evident in the works of Sarfoah (2017) where most of the respondents disagree to the fact that using smart phones for learning was easy to use.

Social Support

This table presents the way respondents cope with the difficulties in distance learning and answering modules in English subject through seeking support from family.

Table VIII Social Support

Theme	Responses
Family Support	<p>"My parents give me enough time to answer the module because they know the importance of academic performance".</p> <p>"I ask my parents/sister how to answer".</p> <p>"I cannot understand so I ask my parents how to answer".</p> <p>"Sometimes I asked some help from my sister to explain some parts of the lesson".</p>

Family Support. This coping mechanism refers to the respondents' way of seeking assistance and support from their families.

"My parents give me enough time to answer the module because they know the importance of academic performance".

The responses of the participants showed that they cope with their struggling by seeking support from others. This support is usually emotional or academic in nature. Students get emotional support from the advices, sympathy, and encouraging words that they get from their friends, parents, or teachers.

"I ask my parents/sister how to answer".

"I cannot understand so I ask my parents how to answer".

This result is congruent with the results of the study of Guevarra and Cimanés (2017) where students' major coping strategy is social support. Social support refers to getting advice from others, talking to someone with similar experience, discussing feelings, getting sympathy, or talking someone how you feel. Students feel that their feelings towards the uncomfortable situation or the problem are valid when they feel that they are heard.

Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) also claimed that getting emotional support from friends and family is an effective way of coping with students' stress. Since students' life is stressful in its nature, students need the understanding and sympathy of their friends and family especially when they are experiencing great pressure from their academic workload.

CONCLUSION

This study supported the idea that the senior high school students were in difficulties in the implementation of distance learning. Although the respondents were not inexperienced in this new modality, as it was first implemented in the year 2020, during the school year, 2020-2021, there was no doubt that they still face struggles and challenges. Distance learning is evidently a challenge in their study. In this connection, this claim can be a ground for carrying out interventions for the benefit of the students. The difficulty of lessons and activities was one problem that emerged in Distance learning. Teachers should make sure that all lessons and activities are understandable and doable at given time. Understanding from parents should always be cultivated. It is encouraged that the students and parents or guardians should have an open communication. In fact, they can come up with making schedules. The initiative of letting the students to spend time in answering their module would be of great help instead of assigning them too many household chores. Students should make their parents understand their situation and the parents on the other hand should understand them. Students and the parents must have an agreement on when and what amount of time should be rendered in doing household chores and in their module so the latter may draw a balance in attending to their responsibility as students and to their duties at home. Setting agenda agreed by the students and their parents could remedy the problem of the students with time constraints. Since some of the respondents experienced having poor Internet connection and since there was no physical interaction with their teacher, family members should maintain their support and assist the students when doing their modules at home. Since most of the respondents had unstable Internet connection and while online discussion was not favorable for all students, it is recommended that students should be given load assistance to assist them with their problem on poor connectivity. This may be done through an issuance of a loaded sim-card to the students. Additionally, teachers can employ home visitation for the selected students to be consulted regarding academic matters twice a month during the retrieval of the module. The schedule for the distribution and retrieval of modules in Laguindingan National High School was every two weeks during Fridays. The visitation should be done following safety protocols to maintain the safety. The notice should be sent through direct messages in messenger or cell phone number. There should be a notice given to the students two days prior and the day before the visitation is when the final reminder should be given. During the visitation safety measures should be imposed. It should only be the student, the teacher and the parent in the area. The visitation is for the teacher to give intervention to students who render poor performance in their modules. The intervention should be based on what aspect of the lessons the students gave a poor result. Parents being a stakeholder in the education of their children should be included in the orientation of the school. Aside from the students themselves, the parents as well as academic institutions, which include the teachers, can play a significant role in maintaining the motivation of the students to learn during distance learning.

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