College Students' Experiences of Culture Shock during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Case of a Philippine State University

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Abstract

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have permeated not only within the healthcare institution but also into every other social institution, including the economy, family, education, religion, and government. Quarantine measures meant to prevent the further spread of the virus have ushered in a so-called "new normal" where safety protocols are foremost. As a result, the "normal" activities related to education, religion, government, economy, and family have drastically changed within a few months. This paper focuses on the culture shock experiences among college students in a state university in northern Cebu, Philippines, given these drastic changes in all aspects of life. Data are taken from students' narratives of their experiences in the new normal, specifically in online classes. Although culture shock is often described as exposure to a different culture, results show that it is similar to students' experiences in this pandemic, wherein there are changes in meanings of space and place, particularly the home. What was once a place primarily for family activities has been transformed into a classroom, a workplace, and a place of worship, among others. Results also show that necessary adjustments have been made to make this arrangement work. This implies that culture shock is not only confined to exposure to a different culture but could also be experienced as a result of drastic changes in everyday life within one's own culture.

Keywords: *culture shock, new normal, education, distance learning, COVID-19*

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic that rocked the whole world saw the confinement of individuals in their respective homes due to quarantine protocols, bringing about several changes in their everyday lives. Going to school, for instance, is a highly social activity

where students face different people within a university setting. At the onset of the pandemic, schooling took a drastic turn as face-to-face learning activities needed to be stopped to lessen the possibility of person-to-person transmission of the virus. A study on confinement effects in higher education posits that this significantly impacts students' learning performance (Gonzales et al., 2020). According to Vaseghi et al. (2012), learning modalities are necessary to receive and deliver information in the teaching-learning process. However, these are also influenced by several factors, including culture. The current situation has led local universities to make drastic changes in teaching-learning strategies and modes of delivery of instruction, despite the lack of preparations and resources. The shift to online learning resulted in changes in students' daily routines and social interactions in a matter of weeks. Several problems were encountered by students, given this situation. This paper tries to make sense of this experience, using the concept of culture shock, from the learners' perspective regarding adjusting to the changes posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in their learning environment.

The term "culture shock" was first introduced by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg (1960, p. 177), where he described it as an "occupational disease of people who have been suddenly transplanted abroad." He expounds that this results from losing the familiar symbols one is oriented with when immersed in another symbolic reality. Culture shock is described as unfamiliarity with a culture other than one's own. Three things are implied in this definition: mobility from one place to another, exposure to another culture, and disorientation.

Oberg (1960) described the culture shock experience in four stages – honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and adjustment. The honeymoon stage is when the phenomenon is still new, exciting, and fascinating. The second stage is when one needs to cope with the new conditions, which might lead to frustration. This is where an individual feels frustration, anger, helplessness, and other crisis. The decision to either continue or stop is usually made at this stage. If one decides to continue, he/she enters the third stage, wherein coping strategies are applied through learning and negotiations, leading to adjustment,
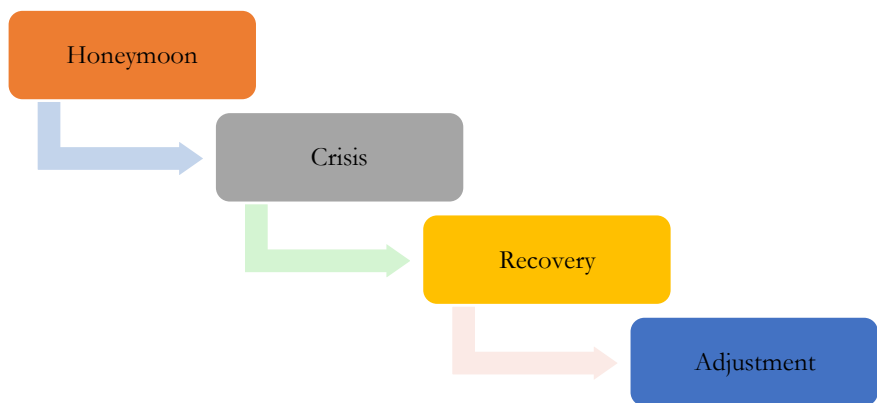

Figure 1. Unilinear stages of culture shock by Oberg

the fourth stage. At this stage, the individual accepts the new conditions, lives with them, and adjusts their behavior accordingly.

There were attempts to 'unpack' the definition of culture shock after Oberg's description (Ward et al., 2001; Furnham, 2015). Various aspects were considered of the emotions felt during culture shock :(1) Strain because of psychological adaptation; (2) Sense of loss and deprivation; (3) Rejection; (4) Confusion; (5) Surprise, anxiety, and disgust; and (5) Sense of impotence. Culture shock is a 'disorientation' of an individual's behavior, emotion, and cognition. Adler (1975) described more stages, starting with initial contact, disintegration, rejection of the new culture, negotiations, reintegration, and independence or autonomy. Such stages imply a gradual adjustment process that differs across peoples and experiences, depending on several internal and external factors.

Different professionals from various disciplines have investigated and researched concepts and proposed theoretical paradigms to understand, explain and mitigate the effects of culture shock. Bochner (2003) identifies two types of cross-cultural contact: a meeting between two cultures when individuals travel to another country and meeting individuals within multicultural societies. Both types involve contact with unfamiliar cultures, often leading to culture shock. Adrian Furnham (2004), an occupational psychologist, posited that international students experience some difficulties that are exclusive to them, aside from the challenges of being a student. He explains that these result from being in a foreign culture. He recommends orientation and counseling programs to help international students adjust to the new environment. Xia (2009) likewise proposes a two-stage solution to the adverse effects of culture shock. The first stage involves preparing to go to another country, while the second stage emphasizes overcoming culture shock stress. Again, the study focuses on individuals going abroad to a different culture. Moreover, Fitzpatrick (2017) reviewed the literature on culture shock, focusing on overseas professionals and their cross-cultural adjustment, and proposed removing "culture" from the culture shock and understanding the various individual adaptations in dealing with the host culture. He contends that culture is not constant but a dynamic social process. He states that the "shock" varies on the person's ability to adapt, and successful adaptation varies widely on individual and other socio-cultural factors within the host culture. The amount of difference or distance between an individual's culture and the host culture is directly related to the amount of stress or difficulty experienced.

Irwin (2007), however, emphasized that culture shock is not at the individual level but instead on the social. He explains that within an anthropological framework, culture shock happens when an individual is placed in an environment with different symbols and meanings from what is considered "normal" in one's culture. Thus, this goes beyond the individual alone. She likewise contends that the progression of culture shock is not linear, as implied in Oberg's four stages, as one may revert to a previous step or others may not progress to the next stage, depending on their reactions to the situation. Cupsa (2018) posits that culture shock has implications at the individual and societal levels resulting from culturally diverse encounters. He says that there is a need to be aware of the impact of culture shock to have a broader understanding and to find ways to respond to the challenges resulting from it.

Most studies of culture shock often describe it as exposure to a different culture away from home. Culture shock has not been studied about experiencing drastic changes in the social and cultural environment at home or in school, as this seldom happens. This paper focuses on describing the experiences of changes in the social and cultural meanings of space and place, particularly the home, which now doubles as a place for formal education, and the consequent reactions to this by learners in the new learning modalities utilized amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This study focuses on the experiences of students in the province of Cebu in the Philippines, who have been so used to face-to-face classroom interactions in the so-called "new normal" in education wherein teaching-learning has been transformed to using online platforms, which is a totally new way especially in universities away from highly-urbanized centers. The home, which was once primarily for family activities, has been transformed into a classroom, workplace, and worship. This paper will describe how students have responded, reacted, coped, and adjusted.

2.   Methodology

This study was conducted in the northeastern part of the province of Cebu in Central Philippines, among college students enrolled in a local state university in one of its municipalities. A state university in the Philippines is funded in full by the government and caters to many students, mostly from middle to lower socio-economic strata. The research participants are residents of the municipalities and cities from Danao to Daanbantayan, who are enrolled in Education courses in one of the state universities in Cebu located in this area (see **Map 1**). The study was conducted after the first eight months of the quarantine period, where face-to-face classes were replaced with online learning modalities in Philippine education.

The study utilized exploratory and descriptive design through narrative inquiry using online platforms, given the limitations of community quarantine measures. The research was done through Online Key Informant Interviews (OKII) and feedback forms. The feedback forms regarding online learning were used to profile the students in general and assess their online connectivity. It utilized the Google Forms application and contained questions regarding the socio-demographic profile of students, including age, sex, civil status, place of residence, household size, the primary livelihood of the household, work status, student status, year level, type of gadget used for online learning, internet provider, and where they access the internet, among others. A total of 594 responses were gathered. The profile was utilized in purposively sampling key informants to be interviewed online.

To gather narratives, various types of informants were purposely selected per year–one from a small household; another from a big household; a full-time student; a working student; and a student parent. Based on these criteria, five students were interviewed for every year level, excluding the first-year level. The students from the three-year levels with relatively good internet connectivity were contacted to explain the study objectives and ask for their consent to participate. Informed consent was obtained from each of the informants before the interview, including seeking permission to record the conversation. Following safety protocols and quarantine guidelines, all interviews were done online. Interview questions started with a free listing of their activities and daily routines prior to the pandemic and at present. From there, further

open-ended questions were asked regarding their experiences in online learning since the start of the quarantine and the cancellation of face-to-face classes to the present. Since these are qualitative interviews, the study participants freely narrated their experiences to the researchers, while the researchers probed some of the responses from their narratives to be able to gather sufficient data. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed using the general stages of culture shock as the framework. Transcriptions of the interviews were read thoroughly by the researchers to identify major emerging themes from the narratives aligned with specific stages of culture shock. Each of the stages served as the theme for coding the interview transcriptions.

https://filipinosaround.com/updates/featured-province-cebu/

Map 1. Map of Cebu Province showing the Research site

Since the data gathered were narratives regarding individual experiences and insights, a narrative analysis shall be utilized to systematically lay out and make sense of

unique experiences (Bamberg 2012: 78). Narrative analysis is often utilized in qualitative research focusing on the content of the narratives gathered from key informants (Buttina 2015: 193). Thus, the narratives are utilized in the presentation of research results also, as these would provide thick descriptions of the experiences from the informants' point of view. The researchers likewise summarized similarly-coded texts from interview transcripts to make sense of the data from the narratives. The constant comparative approach (Glasser and Strauss 1967), commonly utilized as a part of grounded theory, was also utilized in identifying similarities and differences across transcripts through constant comparison and contrast of the content of the narratives.

Based on the narrative analysis of the data gathered, the researchers captured five themes of the participants' experiences of their online classes done at home: Hayahay (Taking it Easy), Kalibog (Disorientation), Kalisod (Difficulty), Kayanon (Adjustment), and Pagbalik (Going back to normal), the first four of which are relatively similar to the stages of culture shock -- honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and adjustment. These shall be discussed in more detail in the next section.

3. Results and Discussion

Under "normal" circumstances, universities in the Philippines conduct classes face-to-face inside a classroom with an average of forty (40) students in attendance. Chairs are arranged side-by-side, wherein students sit close to each other. The instructor facilitates the teaching-learning process while the students participate. In state universities, classrooms usually lack audio-visual and digital equipment and do not have internet connectivity. With quarantine protocols imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these state universities were forced to make drastic changes in the delivery of instruction as well as the handling of classes. Several problems were encountered not just by the administration of these universities but also among teachers and students, which entailed making adjustments.

General Profile of Study Participants. As gleaned from the feedback forms with a total of 594 responses, the general profile of the students shows that majority are full-time students residing in rural barangays.   Most of them utilize a mobile phone to access the internet to join online classes. Five percent (5%) of the respondents have no internet connectivity, 79% have weak connectivity, and 16% have strong connectivity. Internet connection utilized is primarily through mobile data, with 48% Globe Network users and 52% Smart Network users. Moreover, 63% attended their online class at home, 24% is outside the home but within the neighborhood, 10% outside the home but within the barangay, and 3% is outside the barangay.

The 15 key informants interviewed consisted of five, each from the second-year to fourth-year students residing in rural barangays in the northern part of Cebu Province. Since they were purposively identified following a set of criteria, one from each of the five per year levels belonged to a household with more than five persons; another from a household with less than five persons; another was a working student, a full-time student, and a student parent. Regardless of household size or student status, they primarily utilize their mobile phones to attend online classes and complying with class requirements.

This profile of students implies that class work is done within the limits of mobile phones and limited internet connectivity. Despite these limitations, however, students are trying to make do with what is available and accessible to them to comply with the new normal in education. The next section shall discuss the experience of culture shock among students, given this situation.

Stages of Culture Shock in the "New Normal." The concept of culture shock is utilized in this study to make sense of students' experiences in shifting to online learning. The usual requirement to get a college degree is to enroll and attend face-to-face classes at the University. Performance assessment is generally based on attendance, class participation, and examination results. However, this norm has changed due to the quarantine measures because of the pandemic, bringing about some changes in the usual activities of teachers and students in the University. To the researchers, these constitute exposure to a totally different culture ushered in by the "new normal" in education, similar to being exposed to a different culture outside one's own. The results of the study point to stages of the experience similar to the stages of culture shock, as expounded by Oberg and other authors. Each stage shall be described based on the narratives of the informants.

Stage 1: Hayahay (Taking it Easy)
"Nalipay jud mi pag-announce nga dili na magklase. Mao man gyud nang istudyante, malipay og walay klase. Nagtoo jud mi nga perteng hayahaya namo kay di na gud mi muadtos iskuylahan, anha ra mi sa balay. Pwede ra mi mag-chill chill sa amoa. Di na kinahanglan mumatag sayu, mamlete, muadtos skuylahan, mangitag asa makakaon og barato. Mao nga lipay kaayu mi ato. Lipay pod mi kay mas safety man mi kung naa ra mi sa balay, walay kuyaw nga matakdan og COVID." [We were very happly when it was announced that classes would be suspended. That is normal for students to be happy if there are no classes. We really thought that we would have it easy since we did not need to go to school, we will just be staying at home. We could just chill out at home. We do not need to wake up early, spend on fare to go to school, and look for affordable meals. That is why we were very happy at that time. We were also happy since we felt safer at home away from the possibility of contracting COVID-19.]

When it was announced by the national government in the middle of March 2020 that there was a need to suspend face-to-face classes because of the high risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus, study participants narrated that they felt happy at that time. They said it was normal for students to be happy when classes are suspended since they do not need to wake up early, travel to school early, and spend money on the fare, projects, and photocopies of reading materials.

Since there was a need to continue holding classes, administrators instructed teachers to use online modalities for their classes. Thus, online learning was introduced, with some teachers having limited knowledge of handling and utilizing online methods. As a result, some classes were not handled well since many were ill-prepared for such a drastic shift to online learning. Thus, according to study participants, they did not focus on their online classes while at home. They said that they did multi-tasking or *sabin-sabin* while attending online classes. They initially felt they had it easy since they could sit back

or even lie down while attending online classes. Furthermore, online classes were held intermittently and not as regularly as when classes were done face to face.

They said that the new normal setup gave them more freedom in managing their time for schoolwork at a more relaxed pace since they were just in the comforts of their respective homes. As one informant said, *"sa balay ra ko magtrabaho"* (I do school work at home). Another study participant said, *"Dako pa time magtrabaho sa balay compared sa face to face"* (I have much time doing other tasks compared to face-to-face classes). They also have more time to help their family at home. On the other hand, those who did not have internet connectivity at home also thought it was "hayahay" since they could use this as an excuse for not attending online sessions. This was their feeling early on when the quarantine period started. However, this was no longer the case after a few months, as the community quarantine was extended a number of times.

Informants' narratives are aligned with Oberg's (1960) description of the so-called honeymoon stage when the experience is still new. Adler (1975) describes this as the initial contact that does not last for very long as the reality of life will sink after the initial stage. In this case, student learners' happiness with the seemingly "easier" learning modality will be replaced with other feelings a few weeks later, as will be discussed in the next stage.

Stage 2: Kalibog (Disorientation)

"Pagprimero, ok pa, hayahay pa, pero kadugayan daghan na kaayug gipanghatag nga buluhaton sa lain-laing mga subjects namo. Dadungan-dungan raba, galibog na mi unsay unahon. Then daghan kaayug buhatonon, mga sulat-sulat, answer-answer, naa pay magpabuhat og video. Basta perteng dagahana intawn gyud. Mura mig malumos sa kadaghan. Problema pa gyud kay wa mi load sa internet. Then naay mga maestra ug maestro nga makig-meet online then hinay among signal. Lisoda lagi, maypag muadto na lang mig skuylahan kaysa ing-ani. Gatoo mi hayahay, di man diay." [At first, it was ok, we had it easy, but as days went by, our teachers started giving a lot of work to do in our different subjects. These often had the same time frames, and we were confused on what to do first. They gave a lot of writing assignments, quizzes, even making videos to be uploaded. There were really a lot of tasks given to us. We felt that we would drown with all these tasks to do. Then we had a problem on internet load. Some teachers would want to meet us online and our internet signal is slow. It was really difficulty, it would be better to just go to school compared to this. We thought it would be easy, but we were wrong.]

When their respective teachers in several subjects started giving them assignments and exercises, study participants realized that it was not as easy as they first thought. In reality, online classes, like face-to-face classes, still have some activities and tasks they must comply with. In this stage, students began to feel disoriented regarding time and space. They sometimes forget the time and day it was because they were just at home. The routine activities of eating, sleeping, and online activities made them forget the time and day.

Having a small house with many family members also gave them a problem when they were going to study inside their house. The study participants narrated that they sometimes transfer from the living room to the bedroom or kitchen in attending online classes. They had to do multiple-tasking in household chores and essential activities such as eating while attending classes or complying with requirements.

There was also confusion about where to get financial assistance to continue their online schooling in terms of internet load since their parents' work was affected during the pandemic. Even though the University provided students with an internet connectivity kit, they were responsible for purchasing an internet load.

There was also perplexity about using phone applications for online education, making videos required from different teachers, and other online tasks. While studying, they are distracted by the "sugo" or demands from their parents and family members. Others have to help their siblings/children in answering modular activities.

The narratives of our informants illustrate very well the second stage, as described by Oberg (1960), as the crisis stage wherein feelings of helplessness and frustration sink in. This is also what Furnham (2015) describes as a sense of loss or deprivation, wherein the individual feels anxiety and disgust. Based on Adler's (1975) stages, this is the disintegration phase. In this case, student-learners feel a sense of confusion as new learning modalities they are not used to are utilized by their professors. The shift to online learning came suddenly, not gradually, because of the pandemic. Problems and limitations of the home environment to the necessary tools for online learning are highlighted in their experiences in the next stage.

Stage 3: Kalisud (Difficulty)

"Naglisod jud mi uy. Di man diay lalim ang ingon ani. Labi na kay wala koy laptop o desktop nga pwede gamiton, cellphone ra. Usahay muadto pa mig computeran para magbuhat sa assignments. Naa gani mi classmate nga layo ilang balay, hinay signal, mugawas pa siya mangitag signal labi na og mag-online class ang maestro. Dayun gamay baya ni among balay, magdungog ra tanan istorya, dili haom sa pagkat-on sa mga leksyon. Naa pay akong manghod magsigeg sinamok. Lisod pod kaayu wa tay kapangutan-an dayun ba, kay di kaayu mi suod sa among mga classmates kay di lagi magkita. Murag ikaw ra gyung usa kinahanglan mubuhat sa tanang angay buhaton sa mga klase nimo. Pait gyud."
[We had a difficult time. It is not easy. Especially because I do not have a laptop or desktop to use, I only have a cellphone. Sometimes we need to go to the computer shop to do our assignments. We even have a classmate whose house is very far and the internet signal is weak, he needs to go out to look for a place with a stronger signal especially if the teacher holds online classes. And then our house is small, we could hear each other speaking, it is not conducive for learning our lessons. Not to mention, my younger sibling who keeps on pestering me. It is very difficult not to have anyone to ask because we are not close with our classmates because we do not see each other. It is really like you are all alone to comply with all the requirements of all your classes. It is really difficult.]

The participants struggle with the lack of technology because they only have access to online classes through mobile phones. They also pointed out that sometimes they have difficulty joining synchronous classes and submitting their outputs online because of the weak internet signal. It was also difficult to cope with online applications because they were not used to them during the face-to-face classes.

Some study participants also stated that their house was not conducive to learning because of the small area, background noises, and loud music from the neighbors. They also struggled to cope financially since the income during the pandemic has dramatically impacted their livelihood. One of the participants said, "Naibanan ang kahayay sa balay" (It lessened the comforts of home). It means the home where they once go to and rest

has become a place for school activities aside from the usual household activities. The day-to-day routine they were used to was disrupted, and everything they were used to doing physically at school had to be done online.

Some study participants also mentioned that there was also a feeling of disconnection from their classmates as they were only in the confines of their homes. This added to the difficulties in complying with school requirements since the social support mechanism they had in the past was no longer that accessible. Some felt alone and isolated and found it challenging to approach and talk to their classmates or teachers regarding their online classes and personal problems.

The narratives provide specific details on student learners' difficulties in this setup. This is not the same with Oberg's (1960) third stage (Recovery), wherein coping strategies are employed to overcome the difficulties in the second stage. Instead, it is a continuation of Oberg's second stage of the crisis. It is also an extension of Adler's (1975) second disintegration stage, not his third stage of rejection of the new culture. This underscores the extreme difficulties experienced by student-learners being abruptly exposed to a new learning modality with which they must abide and comply. Unlike the usual culture shock experienced by an individual in a culture other than his own, this is a situation wherein the individual does not have a choice but to accept it.

Stage 4: Kayanon (Will)

"Bisan sa kalisud, amoa ra gyung gipaningkamutan nga makaya ra gyud tanang gimbuhaton sa mga klase bisag naa ra sa balay. Kon unsay mga assignments, buhaton na lang gyud kay mao man ang basehanan sa grado. Nangita pod og paagi akong mga ginikanan nga naay lugar sa among balay nga adto ko makabuhat sa mga buhatonon sa klase. Usahay di na ko sugoon sa buluhaton sa balay kay busy sa schoolwork. Maayu pod amoang skuylahan kay gihatagan mi og para internet connection, mangita na lang mig paagi nga maloadan. Kayanon lang gyud ni namo kay para man ni sa kaugmaon nga makahuman og iskuyla. Labi na nga naay pandemic, basig dugay pa mabalik sa daang pamaagi. Paningkamutan na lang gyud." [Despite the difficulties, we strive hard to comply with all the class requirements even if we are just at home. Whatever assignments, we just need to do them because that is the basis of our grades. My parents also find ways to help me have a space to do school works at home. They sometimes excuse me from doing household chores. It is good that our school provided us with a modem for internet connectivity, all we have to do is ensue that we buy load. We will really strive hard to cope with the situation because this is for our future to graduate from college. Especially now with the pandemic, we need to get used to this, because it might take a long time to go back to what we were used to. We will just try our best to cope.]

The way participants cope with the online class is their support system from their families, our participant said, "Nangita ug pamaagi akong mama ug papa maka focus ko sa online class" (My parents find ways for me to focus on my online class). During lessons, they are excused from doing household chores and other activities. Despite a lack of resources, the parents tried to provide a conducive study environment. Aside from their families, classmates, friends, and understanding instructors, likewise encouraged them to carry on despite the difficulties.

What also keeps them going is their aspiration and dream to finish college and help their parents. It is also their will to improve the status of their livelihood. Thus, despite all the odds they encountered, they still persisted in overcoming difficulties in

their online classes. They have also learned to communicate with their teachers regarding these difficulties so that they would be given a chance to comply with the requirements even if this may already be late.

The narratives are aligned with Oberg's (1960) third stage of recovery as well as his fourth stage of adaptation. Coping strategies are utilized in order to adapt to the new learning modalities. These narratives of student-learners are also aligned with Adler's (1975) stages of negotiations, reintegration, and independence. These stages are merged into one based on student learners' narratives as they recover from the shock and simultaneously adapt to the new learning modalities. Being able to cope with difficulties is considered necessary in the recovery and adaptation to the new situation.

Stage 5: Pagbalik (Hope of Going Back)

"Maanad ra gyud tingali mi ani madugay, pero mas ganahan gyud mi nga mabalik sa naandan. Labing maayu gyud unta nga mabalik ang face to face nga klase. Maluoy ang Ginoo, mawala na ning pandemic, mabalik na ta sa normal puhon. Pero samtang di pa, maningkamot na lang gyud ta nga makat-on ra gihapon sa ingon ani nga paagi. Akong tan-aw pod, morag lahi na gyud tingali ang pamaagi bisag mawala na ning pandemic. Mao nga mu-adjust lang gyud ta kutob sa mahimo aron makatapos lang gihapon sa pag-iskuyla." [We will get used to this in due time, but we would really prefer to go back to what we have been used to. It would be better if face to face classes will resume. If God wills the pandemic to be gone, then we could go back to normal soon. But while we still cannot, we will just try our best to still learn from this new learning modality. I also think that it would really be different even when the pandemic is gone. That's why we need to adjust to the changing situations so that we can still graduate.]

After their online experience majority of the participants want to go back to face-to-face classes. They say they can learn and understand more when they are in school with their teacher and classmates physically present. They said they are more focused on their studies at school than at home, where there are distractions and limited space. When at school, they are less distracted in doing school tasks, and they can easily access school services.

Thus, all our study participants are hopeful that classes will return to normal soon. They hope the pandemic will be over so that what they have been used to in teaching-learning face-to-face methods will return. However, since they are unsure when this will be, they said they would try their best to cope with the so-called "new normal" in education.

This last stage, identified by the researchers, in this case, is no longer aligned with Oberg's (1960) or Adler's (1975) stages of culture shock. It is unique in this case since it is not a meeting of an individual to another culture, nor a meeting of individuals in a multicultural environment, but is an experience of individuals abruptly exposed to a new learning modality and situation that is strange to them. Unlike the stages of culture shock that imply a gradual adjustment process by the individuals, in this case, it is not gradual. Thus, the hope to return to the old practice that student-learners have been used to over the years they have been in school. However, still, the adaptation stage of Olberg is emphasized here, even as they hope to go back to what it was before.

In sum, the results of the study are aligned with the four stages of culture shock according to Oberg: honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and adjustment. Such stages are

similar to the themes the study has captured from participants' accounts and narratives. The "hayahay" or honeymoon is the stage where the participants feel an unrealistic dream that is going home in the middle of the class term is a fortunate event. Then the "kalibog & kalisod," the crisis, where the participants feel distressed about the turn of events, on how to cope with the online classes, the financial and technological struggle with their social-economic difficulties in their lives. After is the kayanon stage, the recovery phase, is where the participants' "will to cope" is backed up to "why" they want to pursue their study and fuel them to continue their education even on a different platform. Filipinos see education as a way to improve their economic status and alleviate poverty (Herrin et al., 2003). Lastly, the final stage of culture shock differs from that of Oberg: adjustment. It means the sojourners finally adjusted to the environment and culture they lived. The captured experience of the participants is that they wanted to return to the pagbalik stage. With their experience of 8 months in online classes, many participants want to go back to face to face. According to Lysggard (1956), adapting to culture will take 10-12 months. The time frame from the start of the education change is short for the complete adaptation to the new culture. Thus the participants are still in the middle of the new culture's adjustment period brought about by the pandemic. For that, the participants want to go back, *Pagbalik*, to the face-to-face classes.

4.   Conclusions

The study's description of the experience of culture shock among students engaged in online learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic is not aligned with one of the aspects of Oberg's (1960) definition of culture shock as a feeling of unfamiliarity with a culture other than one's own. It can be experienced through mobility from the place of an individual's culture to the host's culture. The study points to the fact that culture shock does not necessarily happen only when in a different culture away from home. It could also be experienced even at home without the transition of places because of the drastic changes caused by the pandemic. The study, however, aligns with Oberg's stages of culture shock from the honeymoon stage to the adjustment stage, except for a

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In conclusion, changes in various aspects of one's own culture could also result in culture shock, especially if such changes are not gradual and require subsequent changes in how things are done. The drastic changes that were necessarily introduced in various social institutions due to the COCOVID-19andemic have resulted in culture shock. This study focuses on the sudden shift to online classes from regular face-to-face classes in education. It has described the experiences of students from the initial taking it an easy stage to confusion, difficulty, and will to adjust, but still hoping to go back to the old

norms. If there would indeed be a return to the old ways in the future, students might experience a sort of culture shock as they would need to adjust to the situation again. In this case, the authors suggest a cyclical view of culture shock rather than a unilinear one, as people may need to adjust and readjust given changes in norms within their own cultures (See **Figure 2**). Reverting to the old norms in education after the crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic is resolved, would again need some readjustment on the part of students, teachers, and school administrators.

Figure 2. A cyclical view of Culture Shock based on the current study

5.   Recommendation

It is recommended to conduct further studies on other areas, e.g., urban areas because the current research focuses on rural areas. Other factors and conditions can be considered regarding infrastructure, social status, and stress levels to see to what extent cultural diversity affects the individual's adaptation to the new cultural norms. The more diverse the culture is from the individual, the more difficult it is to adapt, and the more similar the culture is to that of the individual, the less difficult it is to adjust. It is recommended that studies be conducted on how school administrators can mitigate the effects of culture shock in online learning among university students to assist them in the adjustment stage. It is also recommended to measure how this disorientation is being experienced by using psychological tests to formulate mitigating plans and minimize the possible effects.

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