

Distance Learning: Its Challenges and Opportunities to Adolescents Relationship

Jane Valete- Fenequito, Urdaneta City University, Philippines

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Abstract

Pandemic became one of the most feared unseen enemy where people are forced to stay at home. The pandemic forced everybody to stay at home. Hence, the study focused on adolescents who are under the distance learning modality. The study delved on the perceived challenges and opportunities of distance learning to their family relationship. This study will add dearth to parent- child relationship specifically on adolescents as they are in the stage of storm and stress. The study utilized the use of qualitative research design using an online version of pen and paper type of interview through google form. The qualitative research design explores the different effects of pandemic specifically in the education system and family relationship where majority of schools offered distance learning modality in the Philippines. Purposive sampling was employed to the 60 adolescents from senior high school to second year college students under distance learning modality since they are at the stage where social interaction is vital. Content analysis was also utilized to interpret the result of the study. The results of the study showed a relationship shift in the adolescents' development where adolescents shift to closeness rather than conflict, dependence rather than independence and spending more time with their family than friends in social media. The distance learning became an avenue for adolescents to seek help from their parents and parents be closer to their children.

Keywords: Adolescents, Challenges, Distance Learning, Opportunities

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Introduction

Distance learning through online or virtual classes became the educational trend when COVID-19 had suddenly forced everyone to stay at home in order to prevent the widespread of the virus (Baticulon et al., 2021; Yu, 2021; Garbe et al., 2020; Joaquin et al., 2020; Avila et al., 2020;). Researches around the world focused more on the effects of COVID-19 pandemic in educational setting such as distance learning outcomes, parents' coping mechanism such as difficulties in coping with the distance learning and as learning facilitators (Sonnenschein et al., 2021; Yu, 2021; Garbe et al., 2020), and family and school relationship (Martinez et al., 2021). Other researches focused on children and adolescent's mental health (Imran et al., 2020), family dynamics such as economic, social and psychological aspects (Shah et al., 2021), and the impact of COVID-19 on families is currently unknown (Vertalaus et al., 2021). Hence, this study will add dearth to parent- child relationship specifically on adolescents as they are in the stage of storm and stress. This will also add to the body of knowledge on the impact of COVID-19 on adolescent relationship with their family members.

In the Philippines, researches focused more on the effects of COVID-19 to students and educational system (Baticulon et al., 2021; Belgica et al., 2020), parent's experiences in pandemic (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Chapay, 2021) as parents are forced to take the role of teachers and learning facilitators. Hence, the study seeks to fill the gap in the literature by looking at the challenges and opportunities of distance learning in adolescent relationship through the lens of adolescents.

The sudden lockdown caused by COVID-19 in 2020 resulted to pedagogical and instructional shift from traditional to online, modular, and flexible distance learning (Belgica et.al, 2020; Avila et.al, 2020). Parents became instant teachers of their children especially the young ones to combat the need for continuous education. In terms of human development, the natural environment for developmental opportunities for children and adolescents such as school and community suddenly became virtual. The face-to-face social interaction is part of human basic need and for specific age group, peer interaction is a vital aspect of human development (Orben et al., 2020) but because of pandemic, the interaction became virtual. Everybody was physically cut off from face-to-face interaction which gave way to social media interaction and virtual communication. However, the absence of interaction in school and presence of social gathering disrupted the children's social support and networks (Vanderhout et al., 2020). Sikali (2020) claimed that physical interaction is part of our daily social interaction and in the face of pandemic, social media such as facebook became the venue for our daily social interaction. Hence, the need for face-to-face social interaction forced every family member to talk to each other whether for mental health purposes or human development. Erik Erikson's theory on psychosocial development (Orenstein et al, 2021), social relationship is important especially in establishing their identity. This is where adolescents also start to development friendships and according to Erikson failure to develop identity and intimacy will lead to isolation. The presence of the family members in this developmental stage of the adolescents during pandemic provides a great help for adolescents to develop their self-esteem as they know more about themselves, face physical changes and experience peers in the presence of their family members.

This pandemic allowed the adolescents to spend more time with their family and less time with their friends (Lake et al., 2022) despite the need for peer interaction (Orben et al., 2020). Similarly, Vanderhout et al. (2020) The house became the only venue for human

development as compared before that the school and community helped in the different developmental opportunities for children and adolescents. The theory of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory shows the sociocultural influence of the environment in the family relationship or interaction (Evans (2020). The theory stated that child development is a complex system of relationship affected by their surroundings or environment from their family environment to broader environment outside their home such as school and community. The lack of interaction of children in the school and community setting in pandemic provides the family an opportunity to become the sole source of face-to-face interaction despite the presence of social media for virtual interaction. Also, Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory under microsystem helps explain the influence of the environment in adolescent's interaction to the member of his/her family. The change in adolescent's environment allows them to realize the presence of their family members as they interact with them at home.

The Philippines is known for having close family knit (Asis, 1994), however Gonzales and Vargas (2021) claimed that modern Filipino family under pre-pandemic spend more time with their gadgets than spending time interacting with their family members. This pre-pandemic scenario of Filipino family situation provides us a clear picture of the absence of interaction among family members. In March 2020, pandemic took away everyone from their work, school, colleagues, friends, and other activities. People were forced to stay at home and family members are forced to spend more time together. The adolescents who spend more time with their friends are given no choice but to interact with their family members.

Adolescence is the stage of storm and stress according to G. Stanley Hall (Buchanan & Hughes, 2014). Furthermore, storm and stress are also the time where trouble with behavior, emotions, and relationships with parents is high. This is due to internal factor such as changes in hormones and external factor such as life stresses. Adolescence is similar to the United Nations concept of Youth, the transition period from dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. In terms of age, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated that it is from age 15-24 years old. In the Philippines, Filipino children are perceived to have no mind of their own and lack of understanding (Alampay, 2014) that is why even when they become adolescents the parents still treat them as children that still need guidance. However, with changes in the environment parents gradually shift their parenting style to dependency to independence and restrictiveness to permissiveness (Medina, 2001). Hence, the study focused on the adolescent relationship as adolescent deal with distance learning where peer interaction is absent and the only source of face-to-face interaction is found in the company of their family members.

Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to determine the effect of distance learning to parent-child relationship among adolescents. It specifically answers the following:

1. What are the perceived challenges in distance learning when it comes to family relationship?
2. What are the perceived opportunities in distance learning when it comes to family relationship?

Methodology

The study used Qualitative Research Design using online version of pen and paper type of interview. Purposive sampling was employed to the 60 respondents. The respondents are from senior high school and college students specifically from first to second year college who experienced the sudden shift of educational system. The table below shows that majority of the respondents are college students (53%) which reflects the more exposure of college students to online since majority of tertiary institutions are in online distance learning whereas senior high school especially the public schools shifted to modular distance learning.

Table 1 Respondents

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Senior High School	28	47
College Students	32	53
Total	60	100

In the conduct of data gathering, the researcher asked permission to the respondents through the letter included in the google form. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher included also a statement regarding Republic Act No. 10173 known as Data Privacy Act to protect all forms information. The Google form was utilized to gather data in order to determine the experience of adolescents in distance learning, as they also experience changes in family relationship. The form was utilized since all the respondents are under distance learning. The form consisted of two parts. The first part is the profile of the respondents whether they are senior high or college students. The second part composed of two open ended questions, "What are the challenges you encountered while having distance learning?" and "In terms of family relationship, what are the perceived opportunities of distance learning in your family relationship?" In terms of interpreting and analyzing the result, Manual Thematic Analysis was first utilized to be able to have themes to help organize the gathered data. Frequency and percentage were utilized to have a clear picture of responses. After that, content analysis was used to determine the meaning of responses of the respondents.

Results

Challenges in Adolescent Relationship in the Context of Distance Learning

Tale 2 shows that distance learning provides challenges in adolescent's relationship in terms of environmental factors (35%), focus in their studies (26.67%), lack of communication (15%), house responsibility (6.67%), frequent use of gadget (5%), dependence in making decision (5%), independence as parents cannot help their children in their studies (5%) and missing their friends (1.66%). The results show that adolescents perceived that their time spent to their family also affects their studies in terms of paying attention to classes and in doing their academic requirements.

Environmental factors such as noise and distractions from family members are perceived to negatively affect their relationship with their family members. This implies that adolescents find their family members as factors affecting their concentration in classes as they are noisy and sometimes disturbed them by talking to them and asking them to run errands. The challenges in adolescent relationship can be rooted in the sudden change of classroom venue, where the house becomes the classroom. The noise and distractions that come from the family members results also to misunderstanding and sometimes adolescents to separate

themselves from their family members so that they can concentrate on their studies. Also, parents often argue with their children specially when they are using their phones because they perceived their children to be on their phones doing activities unrelated to their studies which sometimes resulted to conflict.

This is reflected in the statement “Often argue with parents specially when I am into technology the whole day”. This can be associated with their pre-pandemic experience that family members spend more time with their gadgets as mentioned by Gonzales and Vargas (2021). Also, Öngören (2021) affirmed that domestic conflict and mobile phone addiction are the negative aspects of parent-child relationship during pandemic. The adolescents enrolled in College mentioned that they experienced more this environmental factor as they are always in their gadget because of their online classes unlike the Senior High schoolers that they are more on modules.

The adolescents also claimed that they focused more on their studies than in interacting with their family members. The result implies that adolescents tend to focus more on their studies which sometimes hinder them to talk to their family members. It also implies that despite the difficulty in concentrating with their studies, the adolescents still strive to focus on their studies. There are more adolescents in senior high school who stated that they focus more on their studies and this is due to their modules that they need to finish. However, adolescents in college are also focused on their studies and since they are online they spend more time with their gadgets than talking to their family members. This is reflected in their statements “Always in my online class so I do not have time to talk to my family” and “If I have a class I cannot go out of my room.”

The results also show that lack of communication is perceived by the adolescents to be a challenge while in distance learning mode of instructional delivery. There is a lack of communication because the adolescents are concentrating with their studies be it online or modular which is affirmed by the result that they focus on their studies than communicating with their family members.

The house responsibility also hinders the adolescents to concentrate in their studies and sometimes results to conflict with their family members. This is because parents specially the mother expects their children to help in household chores but due to adolescent’s academic requirement they failed to help. This is reflected in the statements “There are too many activities to be submitted so I can’t help them with the chores, couldn’t do some of the household chores due to early online class” and “Mother gets angry and calls me lazy because I am not doing household chores even if I’m currently studying.” Öngören (2021) confirmed that conflict is experienced due to being at home and it is because of obeying rules. In the Philippines, the unwritten rule that children must help in household chores and balance their studies and their responsibility at home. Helping and balancing studies and household chores are believed to be effective training development for children to become responsible individual. Since children stayed at home, they are expected to finish and take part in doing household chores.

Adolescents perceived decision making, being independent and missing their friends as challenges while under distance learning. This can be because there are no peers to influence their decision so they seek help from their family members. This is reflected in the statements “Became dependent on my family in terms of my decision making.”, “Ask may family before I make decision.” and “Seek the advice of my family when making decision.” However, the

adolescents are also challenged by becoming independent reflected in the statement “They can’t help me in my lesson because they don’t know about it.” and “Children no longer seek the help of parents, they google everything.” This is because adolescents cannot ask their family members to help them with their studies. This allows the adolescents to learn to become independent since there is no classmate or friends to help them with their studies especially in individual activities in school such as essay writing. This is the reason also why they miss their friends despite the presence of technology.

The challenges encountered in adolescent relationship affirms the claim of Öngören (2021) that negative parent-child relationship is attributed to domestic conflicts and phone addiction.

Table 2: Challenges in Distance Learning

What are the challenges you encountered under distance learning when it comes to family relationship?	SH f	College F	Total f	%
Environmental Factor	9	12	21	35.00
Fighting because they are noisy, they are noisy, <i>Naiinis minsan kasi maingay sila habang nagklaklase</i> (sometimes irritated because they are noisy while I am having my class), <i>maingay at hindi masyadong marinig ang sinasabi ng teacher</i> (Noisy and cannot hear the teacher), <i>hindi makapagfocus sa study kasi minsan may kumakausap sa akin</i> (Cannot focus because sometimes they talk to me), Madalas kaming nagkakaroon ng hindi pagkakaintindihan ng mga kapatid ko lalo na kapag nag aaral ako tapos sila nag iingay (Often have misunderstanding with my siblings specially when I am studying because they are noisy), Can’t focus properly, distract me and say whatever they want, they are noisy, I am distracted with their presence, noisy and sometimes my parents thought I do not have a class so they disturbed me, noisy, my siblings are noisy, I get into arguments everytime they tell me to do something when Im doing school requirements, madalas kaming magtalo ng parents ko lalo na kapag maghapon akong nakatutok sa technology (Often argue with parents specially when I am into technology the whole day), Often insensitive when they are talking to me specially when I’m online, Physically present but mentally absent in my class because of too many distractions, Nakakatamad gumawa ng assignments lalo kapag maraming ganap sa pamilya (When there is family event I am lazy to do my assignments), I and my brother play all night instead of studying, Minsan sa sobrang bonding namin nakakalimutan ko ng sumagot ng modules (Sometimes because of family bonding I forgot to answer my modules), Fogot to study because I want to spend more time with my family, noisy and distractive environment sometimes				
Focus More on my Studies than my Family	10	6	16	26.67
Always think of my study, Di sila masyado nakakausap gawa ng marami pang modules na kailangan tapusin (cannot talk much because of so many modules to finish), Always in my online class so I do not have time to talk to my family, Became focus with my study that is why I do not have time to bond with my family, focus more on my study than communicate to them, I use almost all my time in my academic task, kapag may klase hindi ako nakakalabas ng room (If I have a class I cannot go out of my room), Even in bonding time gumagawa pa rin ng activities (Even in bonding time I still do activities), So many modules to finish so no time to talk with them, Sometimes I am loaded with activities in my modules, I almost forgot talking to them because of modules, Nasa kwarto na lang lagi dahil gumagawa ng module kasi tahimik (I am always in my room doing my modules because it is quiet), I rarely get out of my room and see their situation outside, No time to bond because I need to finish my modules, Instead na ang topic ay about family, nauuwi pa rin ang pag uusap about sa mga activitie (Instead that the topic is about family, it still end up talking to activities), Sometimes asked them to help me in my modules so we talk about the modules, Because of				

modules, I do not have time to bond with my family				
Lack Communication	2	7	9	15.00
Lack communication because I am focus on my studies, Hindi makausap dahil nakatutok sa online class (They cannot talk to me because I am focus in my online class), Communicate less when studying, May time na kapag kinakausap nila ako at naka earphone ako kasi may klase (There is a time that they talk to me but I have earphone because I have a class) , magagalit sila kasi hindi daw ako sumasagot (They got mad because I am not answering), Become more listener because I cannot pay attention to them				
House Responsibility	2	2	4	6.67
Sometimes, there are too many activities to be submitted so I can't help them with the chores, couldn't do some of the household chores due to early online class, Mother gets angry and calls me lazy because I am not doing household chores even if I'm currently studying, Feeling nila kapag nakaupo ako at nagce-celphone wala na akong ginagawa kaya inuutusan nila ako pero ang totoo may ginagawa ako (they feel that when I am sitting and using my phone, I am not doing anything but in truth I am working)				
Frequent Use of Gadget	2	1	3	5.00
Always in gadget, spend more time on gadgets, always browsing the internet				
Dependence in Decision Making	0	3	3	5.00
Became dependent on my family in terms of my decision making, ask may family before I make decision, seek the advice of my family when making decision				
Independence	2	1	3	5.00
They can't help me in my lesson because they don't know about it, Children no longer seek the help of parents, they google everything				
Missing Their Friends	1		1	1.66
Even though I am with my family I still tell them I miss my friends				
Total	28	32	60	100.00

**f= frequency*

Opportunities in Adolescent Relationship in the Context of Distance Learning

Table 3 shows that distance learning provides opportunity for adolescents to become closer to their family members, get more time to bond (50%), communicate (10%), be closer to each other (10%), develop strong relationship (6.67%), know more about the family members (6.67%), provide support (6.67%), help each other do household chores (5.00%), feeling of safe and productive (3.33%), and eating together (1.67%). The results show that parents and their children had more quality time and opportunities to watch movies together and activities together. Also, having more time with their family, makes their relationship stronger. The family members also become more appreciative of the family's support in making decisions. This according to Morelli et al. (2020) due to the fact that parents suddenly became their only point of reference. This implies that adolescents are forced to lean on to their family members in helping them in their decision making.

The results show that adolescents find distance learning as an opportunity to know more their family members by doing activities together. This according to Bhamani et al. (2020) allows parents to become source of comfort and remove their worries. In terms of communication and become closer to each other, both adolescents from senior high and college perceived it as an opportunity to become closer to their family members as because they can open up to them. This helps them build strong relationship as Asis (1994) claimed that Filipino has a close family knit. The results in knowing more my family members, and support affirmed the previous results. This implies that the time spent by family members results to a positive

relationship. Family members were able to strengthen more their family ties by enjoying the company of each other, doing activities together, becoming more open and avoiding misunderstanding, settling and understanding individual differences, and showing their support in their academic requirements. Also, this allows the adolescents to become safety cautious and financially help by becoming productive. Some adolescents build small online business usually selling items in the internet to help in their family's daily expenses.

Adolescents perceived distance learning as an opportunity to help in household chores. In pre-pandemic, students spend most of their time in school that is why they cannot help much in household chores. Similarly, eating together becomes again a normal scenario in every household.

The opportunities perceived by the adolescents contributed to the positive relationship which affirms the findings of Öngören (2021) that the positive parent-child relationship during the pandemic period is found to be spending more time together, sharing, doing activities and communicating to each other.

Table 3: Opportunities in Distance Learning

What are the opportunities you encountered under distance learning when it comes to family relationship?	SH f	College f	Total f	%
More Time To Bond	11	19	30	50
More time to bond with my family, more time to bond, Bonding with my family, Can spend some time with my siblings without quarreling, more time to share jokes and stories, to seize and enjoy the moment”, Laugh with my lolo and lola, More time to visit relatives, “nakakasama ko ng matagal ang aking kapatid” (Spend more time with my siblings), Spend time with love ones, more time to help and less conflict, Bonding lagi sa pamilya (always bonding with family), More time to bond in our house, More time for serious talk, nakakapagbonding araw araw (can bond everyday), More time for serious talk, watch movies together, Create wonderful memories that last a lifetime, bonding helps our family become more strong, Can see me every day, Can be with them while studying, Nakakasama ang buong pamilya (Be with the whole family), Always with them, More time to talk together, Always bonding time with the family when I am not busy with my studies, eating and cooking together, more time to bond, Nagkaroon ng oras para makilala and makipagbonding sa pamilya (have time to know and bond with the family), Masmarami ng oras para masmakilala ang ugali ng isa’t isa (have more time to know more the attitude of each other), More time to share stories and play together, Often have time for each other except when busy sa classes, More time for bonding with my family, Spend more time to talk, play, do household chores and to do things together with my family				
Communication	3	3	6	10
Communicate with them anytime and it becomes easier to talk to them and open up what is going on with my studies and my life, Can talk to each other without misunderstanding, More time to talk with my family members like talk about problems, Have someone to talk to when I am alone, Develops my verbal communication by sharing ideas at nakakapag usap ng mabuti (and can talk seriously) , Able to be open and tell to them about my struggles in studies and sometimes may mapagtatanganan ka (you have someone to ask)				
Become Closer to Each Other	4	2	6	10
Lalong nagiging close sa isa’t-isa (Becomes closer to each other), Get closer and open to my family, Had closer and stronger relationship because we also spend time reading bible and praying together, Got to understand each other, Mas involve na sila ngayon sa aking buhay kesa noon(They are more involved in my life now), Become more open to my parents and				

siblings				
Develop Strong Relationship	2	2	4	6.67
Napatibay pa nito ang samahan namin sa pamilya (It strengthen our family relationship), Masna-bui-build iyong malalim na samahan (It build deeper relationship), Nagiging deep and firm pa ang aming samahan (Our relationship becomes deep and firm), Strengthened and build up our relationship				
Know More my Family Members	2	2	4	6.67
Know my family members more, Still in the process of knowing each other behavior, Know more their interest, Become faithful to their family as I come to know them better				
Support	3	1	4	6.67
I feel appreciated at some point lalo na kapag sinsabi nila “kaya mo iyan” (especially when they say “You can do it) but not always, Mas naaappreciate ko sila kasi masnakikita ko kung gaano sila kasupportive sa akin (I appreciate them more especially when I see how supportive they are to me), Naging available kami sa isa’t isa (We become available to each other) lalo na kapag humingi ako ng advice sa parents ko bago magdesisyon (especially when I ask for advice to my parents before I make decision), Help my younger sibling and my nieces answer and finish their module				
Help in Household Chores	2	1	3	5.00
Help doing household chores, Help mother in household chores, unity in doing household chores				
Others- Safety and Productiveness	1	1	2	3.33
Lots of realization about my family, when member is isolated the parents need to take better care of their children, can’t go out to bond in order to be safe and others be safe from us; More money to save because I don’t need to go to school that is why I help earn money				
Eat Together		1	1	1.67
sabay-sabay na kumain tuwing kainan and nagkwekwentuhan (Eat together every meal time and sharing stories)				
Total	28	32	60	100.00

Conclusions

The study concludes that challenges face by the adolescents while in distance learning are the environmental factors that disturbed them in their classes. In terms of opportunities, the adolescents have more time to bond with their family members, become closer to their family members, become dependent to them in making decisions and enjoy their meal with their family members.

Recommendations

For further study, include parents’ view on the effect of distance learning to their relationship with their children in terms of communication. Also, the researcher recommends to conduct a study on the difference of male and female adolescents’ perception on the effect of pandemic to their family relationship. The result will provide vital information that will help parents to deal with their children in terms of communicating with them.

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Contact email: fenequitojane@gmail.com
janefenequito@ucu.edu.ph