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Students' Preferred Instructional Practices

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ABSTRACTS

The main objective of this descriptive research was to find out the students' preferred instructional practices during the global pandemic. The respondents were 308 students coming from 11-course offerings enrolled during the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022. The study was conducted at Notre Dame of Tacurong College, Tacurong, Sultan Kudarat Province, the Philippines. Findings showed that the mean ratings of the eight items ranged from 2.64 to 6.24. Since ranking was used to determine the most and least preferred instructional practices, the item with the least mean rating is ranked 1, and the item with the highest mean rating is ranked 8. Hence, the three most preferred instructional practices are: Item 1, Assignments that ask students to express what they have learned and what they still need to learn, obtained the weighted mean of 2.64 (SD = 2.24) and interpreted as Strongly Preferred; Second is Item 3, Live sessions "zoom meetings" in which students can ask questions and participate in discussions, got the weighted mean of 3.31 (SD = 1.74) and interpreted as Preferred; and the third is Item 2, Frequent quizzes or other assessments, obtained a weighted mean of 3.44 (SD = 2.10) and interpreted as Preferred.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, instructional practices refer to the actions made by teachers to develop lessons in the classroom. These instructional practices represent the primary features and behaviors of teachers that may be observed in their classrooms throughout time (Saleh & Jing, 2020). These acts consist of a variety of approaches, such as structuring the physical environment, establishing norms and procedures, maintaining pupils' attention during lessons, and encouraging participation in extracurricular activities. Instructional methods are an issue of concern for all educators (Jimenez, 2020).

Teachers establish instructional techniques while promoting learning activities for pupils. This may occur in traditional face-to-face instruction, online classes, or a combination of these two modes of instruction and learning. Doll *et al*. (2021) noted that with the development of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on education at all levels and types, the education sector, including colleges and universities, has been compelled to respond with an abrupt change to online instruction. Effective online instruction necessitates teachers' careful consideration, planning, and technological and human assistance (Khoiriyah *et al*., 2021; Mugianti *et al*., 2022).

During the COVID-19 epidemic, studies evaluating student preferences for educational modalities were done (Asriyanti *et al*., 2021). In an online learning environment (also known as e-learning), keeping students thoughtfully engaged and motivated while dispensing the required course content requires faculty to facilitate a safe, nonjudgmental environment in which students are encouraged to share their perspectives, personal and professional experiences, and other viewpoints. The educator must demonstrate an educator-facilitated, active, student-centered learning process in which students are held accountable for their active engagement and self-directed learning while maintaining a facilitator role to enhance the learning process (Sharoff, 2019).

Choi *et al*. (2020) developed a report in collaboration with Langer Research Associates and Every Learner Everywhere and Tyton Partners. Students were asked whether their course following COVID-19 utilized each of eight instructional approaches identified by prior research as leading to more effective online teaching and learning. Assignments that ask students to express what they have learned and what they still need to learn; Breaking up class activities into shorter pieces than in-person courses; Frequent quizzes or other assessments; Live sessions in which students can ask questions and participate in discussions; Meeting in "breakout groups" during a live class; Personal messages to individual students regarding their progress in the course;

Conklin and Garrett Dikkers (2021) explored how certain instructors were able to sustain a social presence in the shift to the online environment, as well as the instructional strategies they employed to facilitate these continued connections. The data analysis indicated four primary themes that were effective in keeping students in contact with their instructor, course material, and peers. These include connectivity, instructor responsiveness and coaching, best practices for online learning such as material chunking, and empathetic facilitation.

According to Li *et al*. (2021), effective instructional practices from the instructors' perspective include the following: regular announcements and reminders; varied materials and diversified media in content delivery; proactive outreach with timely support; prompt response; quality feedback on assignments; and discussion forum activities. Effective educational approaches were characterized by six themes from the perspective of students. These include varied materials and diverse media in content delivery; clear assignment

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expectations; timely response; regular announcements and reminders; quality assignment feedback; and explanation of course subject with concrete examples.

In addition, Li *et al*. (2021) revealed that, according to teacher perceptions, ineffective instructional techniques include: Poor attendance in synchronous class meetings; Lack of high-quality interaction in the discussion forum; Unsuccessful group projects; and Deadline-related issues. Four themes emerged from student answers to inadequate educational approaches that impacted their online learning. These include insufficient instructor communication and participation, unclear expectations for course assignments, unreasonable workload, and inadequate assignment and assessment feedback.

Sun and Liu (2021) presented efficient ways for implementing online theoretical mechanics instruction based on many years of reflection on the offline classroom teaching of theoretical mechanics and the online teaching practice of the first half of 2020. The theoretical mechanical lessons were produced with a "student-centered" approach, including the preparation of teaching materials, students, and teaching methods. These teaching strategies include (a) adopting live-stream teaching as the primary method of instruction, (b) applying electronic blackboard to online deductions, (c) linking theory to practice for better knowledge comprehension, (d) integrating curriculum content in ideological and moral education, and (e) conducting a formative assessment to supervise and motivate online learning. These online teaching tactics have effectively fostered the development of students' autonomous learning skills.

Lastly, Jun *et al*. (2021) investigated the perspectives of students and field instructors regarding the most effective teaching strategies throughout the transition to online teaching. Students favored asynchronous course content, such as recorded class lectures and discussion boards, over live discussions and lectures due to its greater flexibility. Students completing the practicum process witnessed major disruptions to traditional social work education; nonetheless, both students and field supervisors adapted by permitting greater use of video conferencing and telephone practice. The findings reveal distinct student preferences and may inspire future enhancements to e-learning (Azzahra *et al*., 2022; Winarni & Rasiban, 2021).

Similar to other institutions of higher education, Notre Dame of Tacurong College (NDTC) has had difficulty determining what changes may be made to its teaching procedures to meet the demands of online students. Teachers employ a variety of instructional tactics to teach or support learning. During a pandemic or at any time, it is crucial to understand which teaching approaches or strategies pupils prefer so that the required adaptations can be made to accommodate their learning needs. Ultimately, the ultimate purpose of NDTC is to provide quality education.

In this context, the researchers performed this survey to determine the preferred instructional approaches of college students during the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2021-2022 school year.

The main objective of this research was to find out the students' preferred instructional practices during the global pandemic. Specifically, it attempted to answer the following research problems:

(i) What are the students' three most preferred instructional practices?
(ii) What are the students' two least preferred instructional practices?

DOI:
p- ISSN: 2828-4887 e- ISSN: 2828-4860

2. METHODS

2.1. Research design

A descriptive method of research was used to describe the college students' most and least preferred instructional practices of their teachers during the global pandemic.

2.2. Locale of study

The study was conducted at Notre Dame of Tacurong College (NDTC), a Catholic institution located in the City of Tacurong, the lone component city of the Province of Sultan Kudarat. NDTC offers preschool, complete elementary, junior, and senior high schools, and college education with 11 academic programs.

2.3. Respondents

The respondents of the study were 308 students representing 71.96% of 428 students who answered the questionnaire. Of these 308 respondents, 210 (68.20%) were female and 98 (31.80%) were male. As to age, the greatest group consisted of 238 (77.30%) who were 19 to 21 years old; and the least number of 9 (2.90%) were 16 to 18 years old. As to year level, the greatest number, or 130 (42.20%) were in the third year and the least number 12 93.90%) were in the first year. As to course, respondents got the highest frequency of 96 (31.20%). Other details on the profile of the respondents are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Profile of the respondents (n = 308)

Profile		*f*	%	Profile	*f*	%
Sex				Course		
	Male	98	31.80	BSED	21	6.80
	Female	210	68.20	BEED	32	10.40
Year Level				BSSW	38	12.30
	First	12	3.90	BSCrim	36	11.70
	Second	81	26.30	AB Pol.Sci	6	1.90
	Third	130	42.20	BSCS	4	1.30
	Fourth	85	27.60	BSCpE	10	3.20
Age				BSN	96	31.20
	16 to 18 years old	9	2.90	BSBA	37	12.00
	19 to 21 years old	238	77.30	BSA	25	8.10
	22 years and onward	61	19.80	BSHM	3	1.00
				Total	308	100

2.4. Sampling

The researchers intended to include all students as respondents to this study. However, only 428 responded as to the designated cut-off time, and after excluding invalid or not completed questionnaires, only 308 of them were considered valid and had become the source of data to answer the research questions of this study.

2.5. Instrumentation

The researchers adapted a questionnaire taken from the report of Choi *et al*. (2020) about the instructional practices preferred by college students. Part I of the questionnaire sought information from the respondents as to their sex, age, year level, and course enrollment. Part II is about the teachers' instructional practices. There were eight items where the respondents were asked to rank them in the order of their preference using numbers 1 to 8. When an

DOI:
p- ISSN 2828-4887 e- ISSN 2828-4860

instructional practice is marked 1, it means that this is the first preference of the respondent among the given instructional practices, 2, means second preference, 3, means third preference, and so on.

2.6. Data gathering procedure

The researchers asked permission from the Office of the School President to gather data from the respondents through a letter noted by the Researcher Development Officer. Then, the Office of the Information Communication and Technology Services Officer (ICTSO) was requested by the Research and Development Office (RDO) to upload the online survey questionnaire through google forms for the students to answer. The accomplished questionnaires were retrieved after a designated cut-off date. In process of gathering data, health protocols were strictly observed.

2.7. Statistical treatment

Upon gathering the accomplished questionnaires, they were tallied and computed using appropriate statistical tools. For the profile of the respondents, the researchers used frequency and percentage. For the students' preference of instructional practices, frequency, percentage distribution, ranking, and mean and standard deviation were used.

2.8. Data analysis

The data to describe the profile of the respondents, the frequency counts and percentage distribution were used. Further, to analyze the findings on the student's preference for instructional practices, only the three highest, and two lowest weighted mean ratings and standard deviation were focused on in the presentation of findings.

To describe the degree of students' preference for the instructional practices of their teachers, the following ranges of means in an 8-point Likert scale with corresponding interpretations were utilized using the following interpretation:

(i) 1.00 – 1.99 is the Very Strongly Preferred;
(ii) 2.00 – 2.99 is the Strongly Preferred;
(iii) 3.00 – 3.99 is the Preferred;
(iv) 4.00 – 4.99 is the Fairly Preferred;
(v) 5.00 – 5.99 is the Moderately Preferred;
(vi) 6.00 – 6.99 is the Slightly Preferred;
(vii) 7.00 – 7.99 is the Hardly Preferred;

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main research problem of this study deals with the degree of students' preference for their teachers' instructional practices. **Tables 2** and **3** show the findings. **Table 2** shows that Item 1, Assignments that ask students to express what they have learned and what they still need to learn, is ranked first. Furthermore, **Table 3** shows that 155 (50.32%) of respondents said they liked or preferred their professors' educational practices. According to the findings, the majority of students choose tasks that challenge them to use what they have learned in their lectures and to complete assignments or projects that will grow or strengthen their skills and talents.

This viewpoint is reinforced by the University of Twente's (n.d.) write-up, which states that an assignment is a piece of (academic) work or task. It allows students to learn, practice, and demonstrate that they have met their learning objectives. It also shows the teacher that the

DOI:
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students have met their objectives. Furthermore, Choi *et al*. (2020) revealed that assignments that required students to articulate what they had learned and what they still needed to learn were one of the instructional approaches with the greatest individual benefits on students' overall course satisfaction.

Table 2. Students' preferred instructional practices (n = 308).

	Instructional Practices	Mean	*SD*	Interpretation	Rank
1.	Assignments that ask students to express what they have learned and what they still need to learn	2.64	2.24	Strongly Preferred	1
2.	Frequent quizzes or other assessments	3.44	2.10	Preferred	3
3.	Live sessions "zoom meetings" in which students can ask questions and participate in discussions	3.31	1.74	Preferred	2
4.	Meeting in "break out groups" during live sessions	4.58	1.41	Fairly Preferred	4
5.	Personal messages to individual students about how they are doing in the course or to make sure they can access course materials	4.69	1.42	Fairly Preferred	5
6.	Using real-world examples to illustrate the course content	5.15	1.83	Moderately Preferred	6
7.	Work on group projects separately from the class meetings	5.94	2.12	Moderately Preferred	7
8.	Providing prompt feedback on class works	6.24	2.50	Slightly Preferred	8

Table 3. Scoring of frequencies and percentages of students' responses (n = 308)

Item	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth
1	155 (50.32%)	41 (13.31%)	34 (11.00%)	14 (4.50%)	19 (6.20%)	12 (3.90%)	12 (3.90%)	21 (6.80%)
2	18 (5.80%)	148 (48.10%)	34 (11.00%)	30 (9.70%)	13 (4.20%)	16 (5.20%)	28 (9.10%)	21 (6.80%)
3	51 (16.60%)	24 (7.80%)	149 (48.40%)	22 (7.10%)	18 (5.80%)	23 (7.50%)	10 (3.20%)	11 (3.60%)
4	4 (1.30%)	14 (4.50%)	13 (4.20%)	166 (53.90%)	40 (13.00%)	38 (12.30%)	16 (5.20%)	17 (5.50%)
5	11 (3.60%)	18 (5.80%)	24 (7 .80%)	35 (11.40%)	171 (55.50%)	22 (7.10%)	17 (5.50%)	10 (3.20%)
6	19 (6.20%)	25 (8.10%)	22 (7.10%)	19 (6.20%)	20 (6.50%)	159 (51.60%)	32 (10.40%)	12 (3.90%)
7	20 (6.50%)	24 (7.80%)	13 (4.20%)	9 (2.90%)	15 (4.90%)	19 (6.20%)	166 (53.90%)	42 (13.60%)
8	30 (9.70%)	14 (4.50%;')	19 (6.20%)	13 (4.20%)	12 (3.90%)	19 (6.20%	27 (8.80%)	174 (56.50%)

Table 2 also shows that Item 3, Live sessions "zoom meetings" in which students can ask questions and participate in discussions, is ranked second with a weighted mean of 3.31 (SD = 1.74), and is read as Preferred. According to **Table 3**, 149 (48.40%) respondents prefer this instructional approach to other teaching tactics utilized by their teachers. Because they could see or hear their teacher as well as their classmates, respondents may have found live sessions more pleasurable, fulfilling, and stimulating. They must have missed the interaction they had during their pandemic preparation classes.

These points of view are consistent with the findings of Rios *et al*. (2018), who discovered that using audio, video, and mobile communication tools improves students' online learning

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experiences. Students that are engaged are also more satisfied with online courses and more motivated to learn. Cookson *et al*. (2020) discovered that students preferred animated instructional films over textbooks and claimed videos helped them recall the subject.

Furthermore, **Table 2** shows that Item 2, Frequent quizzes or other assessments, is ranked third with a weighted mean of 3.44 (SD = 2.10) and is interpreted as Preferred. According to **Table 3**, 148 (48.10%) respondents prefer this instructional approach to other teaching strategies utilized by their teachers. They must have found quizzes or other forms of evaluation useful in assessing their grasp of the majority of the topics they learned on their own. This viewpoint is consistent with what Sun and Liu (2021) identified as effective ways for adopting online theoretical mechanics instruction. As a result, formative assessment is used to manage and motivate online learning. The use of these online teaching methodologies has effectively fostered the development of students' ability to study independently.

Table 2, on the other hand, demonstrates that Item 7, Work on group projects away from class meetings, is ranked 7 or the second from the bottom of the instructional practices ranked. As shown in **Table 3**, Item 7 received a weighted mean of 5.94 (SD = 2.12) and was regarded as Moderately Preferred by 166 (53.90%) of the respondents. These students must have had unfavorable experiences that led them to despise their teachers' educational practices. They most often had difficulties working on group tasks outside of class meetings. It should be noted that this occurred during the pandemic when students were required to stay at home and attend their online classes. Internet connectivity can be an issue, making it difficult to reach group members and get technical assistance from lecturers. Students' lack of self-motivation and self-regulation can also be a major impediment to completing group work.

According to Yi and Cornelius (2004), students' negative experiences include delayed feedback and inaccessible technical support from instructors, a lack of self-regulation and self-motivation, and a sense of isolation among students.

Finally, **Table 2** demonstrates that Item 8, Giving prompt feedback on classwork, is ranked 8 or the students' least favorite instructional practice from their teachers. Item 8 had a weighted mean of 6.24 (standard deviation = 2.50) and was classified as Slightly Preferred. There are 174 (56.50%) respondents that ranked this instructional activity last, implying that they may have had unfavorable encounters with this behavior of their professors. This result suggests that many students did not receive prompt feedback on their quizzes, examinations, group projects, or other forms of evaluations.

This finding, that providing rapid feedback on classwork is the least favored by respondents, is consistent with the findings of Said (2017) study, which investigated effective teaching practices, one of which is offering prompt feedback to facilitate successful learning. Furthermore, Watson *et al*. (2017) identified the top ten online educational tactics, one of which is providing students with feedback. On the one hand, Li *et al*. (2021) reported that ineffective instructional practices that hampered students' online learning include insufficient instructor communication and engagement, unclear course assignment expectations, unreasonable workload, and insufficient feedback on assignments and assessments.

To summarize, respondents prefer the following instructional practices: Item 1, Assignments that ask students to express what they have learned and what they still need to learn; Item 3, Live sessions "zoom meetings" in which students can ask questions and participate in discussions; and Item 2, Frequent quizzes or other assessments. According to the respondents, the two least desired teaching techniques are Item 8 for providing prompt

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feedback on class activities, and Item 7 for working on group projects independently from class meetings.

4. CONCLUSION

Teachers employed different strategies to promote student learning. As they continually deliver the course content to students to accomplish the learning objectives in their day-to-day class, they have developed certain characteristics or behavior or instructional practices as tagged in this study. Based on the findings gathered from 308 college students who enrolled during the COVID-19 pandemic, it can be concluded that they have acclimatized themselves to the learning environment with online classes as the primary mode of delivery of instruction.

The majority of the respondents preferred that their teachers give them assignments let them to express what they have learned and what they still need to learn. It implies that students have learned more to study independently and wanted to convey to their teachers what they have understood from the given assignments and are willing to do more to acquire the necessary skills needed in their course. They also prefer favorably these instructional practices; namely, the sessions or "zoom meetings" where they can ask questions and participate in discussions; and the frequent quizzes or other assessments.

Adversely, they preferred least the instructional practices related to giving feedback on their assignments, quizzes or examinations, or other class projects. This finding implies the great need for students to know promptly their teachers' comments or feedback on their class work. Delays in giving feedback to students can dampen the enthusiasm of the students in their studies. It might be too late for them to make up for their deficiencies if ever they did not perform well in their examinations or projects required them.

It is then recommended, that teachers who are habitually delayed in giving grades or any other form of feedback to students regarding their academic performance be urged to correct or managed their time more effectively. This is to remedy the negative experience of many students making them prefer this instructional practice the least among other instructional practices of their teachers.

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6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors state that publishing this paper does not include any conflicts of interest.

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