

STUDENTS' PERCEIVED ATTAINMENT ON GENERAL OUTCOMES IN ONLINE CLASSES IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Assessing the attained general outcomes of students during a pandemic is both a challenge and an opportunity. General skills are categorized into two: general academic outcomes and general intrapersonal outcomes. This study attempted to determine the perceptions of the students on the level of attainment toward general outcomes. Data were retrieved from more than 1,000 undergraduate students from different programs in a private higher education institution (HEI). The majority of the students perceived that their academic skills had improved. Among those skills, the use of search engines and software tools was rated highest. Also, students' perceptions of the attainment of general academic and intrapersonal skills indicated a significant difference. Moreover, themes that emerged from the study are personal qualities, self-directed learning, motivation, and skills enhancement. Implications include that teachers' competencies in relation to similar outcomes should be studied further to determine the concordance of students' outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Academic Skills, Intrapersonal Skills, Students, Online Classes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Assessing the attained general skills during the pandemic is both a challenge and an opportunity. It is a challenge because the majority of the teaching and learning deliveries are conducted online or virtually. At the same time, it is an opportunity because it provides an avenue for both teachers and students to become creative and innovative in using technology and explore other means of using digital technology. Assessing outcomes can be used as multiple indicators of student performance [13] and to amend curriculum activities [14].

Active student engagement, which is premised on developing students' competencies, is placed on temporary suspension for the entire academic year due to COVID-19. Thus, accurate learning metrics become difficult to discover. Between these challenges and opportunities, assessment of the level of student attainment to the general outcomes or student attributes become more imperative. In a study conducted by Balsicas and Adanza [15], assessment results of learning outcomes are varied. There are some characteristics that constantly receive high results, like moral and spiritual accountability and self-directed learning. Attributes such as collaboration, community outreach programs, and information and communication literacy, on the other hand, received low ratings [15]. Said results indicated the need to study further the graduate attributes of the institution but consider a separate assessment for outcomes focused on academic and intrapersonal outcomes.

An outcome (also known as general skill or graduate attribute) is anything that happens to a student because of his or her attendance at a higher education institution in a certain course of study [1]. General outcomes may be referred to as the key abilities or core skills that a university or college graduate should possess upon

completion of his or her education and were highlighted under generic learning objectives [2]. Communication and interpersonal skills, information technology and computation abilities, information management skills, and problem-solving skills are examples of core competencies [3]. Other researchers classified learning results into two categories: program-level learning outcomes and course-level learning outcomes [4]. In this study, general outcomes refer to general academic skills, which are research, communication, critical thinking and creativity, and information literacy, while intrapersonal skills include moral and spiritual, self-directed learning, collaboration, and multicultural skills.

According to the Australian Higher Education Council [5], regardless of the topic or area of study, all graduates should possess certain skills, graduate qualities, and values. These are the graduate attributes that students should have acquired during their academic journey. These include qualities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, effective communication, and related discipline-related skills; personal attributes such as creativity and imagination; and values such as cooperation, collaboration, and self-directed learning. It also mentioned that the value of higher education should be assessed in terms of graduate quality rather than other qualities of the facilities provided by various schools. Furthermore, the degree to which graduates show high levels of general abilities, qualities, and values should be used to assess a graduate's quality [6]. Moreover, Barrie [7] suggested four categories of general attributes, namely: precursor conceptions, complement precursors, translation conceptions, and enabling conceptions. Enabling ideas highlighted fundamental characteristics like aptitudes and skills that changed the learner and promoted the development of new knowledge [6]. General skills, which are also known as general outcomes and core competencies, are the skills necessary for students in their current and future personal and professional careers [8] to enable the students to acquire the generic outcomes or graduate attributes.

Additionally, research has shown that specific educational strategies, like active learning techniques and group activities, can promote the development of general skills [9,10,11]. However, Curtis and Denton [12], as cited by Chapman and O'Neill [6], mentioned that although various universities have developed and published their own culturally developed methodologies, there is no literature that covers general approaches to assessing generic competencies in higher education.

Relatively few studies have attempted to look into the various degrees of students' reported achievement of their general academic learning outcomes or basic skills that apply to a variety of courses [16], particularly when the delivery of teaching and learning is entirely online. Most studies mentioned that student learning outcomes are effective predictors of student satisfaction in online learning [17], while others articulated that the acquisition of perceived learning outcomes provided student satisfaction [18].

In a study conducted before the pandemic, during which teaching and learning were delivered primarily in a face-to-face setting, it mentioned that outcome results are useful as a basis for future amendments on the curriculum, syllabus, and instructional activities [14]. According to a study by Chu et al. [16], many scholars throughout the world have conducted substantial research on describing learning outcomes and determining the extent to which learning outcomes were accomplished [19]. Learning objectives are detailed descriptions of what teachers want their students to grasp and be able to do after finishing a course, unit, or lesson [20]. They are also explicit statements indicating what a learner should understand, comprehend, and perform [19]. However, the lack of in-person interaction might influence the development of generic outcomes as opposed to a face-to-face setting.

Jones [24] stated that one of the main factors affecting the quality of online learning is the significance of instructor-led facilitation and social presence [25]. Eom and Ashill [26] found that student satisfaction was strongly

influenced by instructor expertise and facilitation.

This study is supported by previous studies, which usually focused on student views on general outcomes, but there has yet to be a study about students' views on the attainment of both academic and intrapersonal skills. The main objective of the study is to find out how students perceive the attainment of student outcomes or the development of their competencies during a pandemic when in-person classes are not allowed. This study attempted to determine the perceptions of the students on the level of attainment toward general academic and intrapersonal skills. Moreover, it attempted to examine if there are differences in general academic and intrapersonal skills among students. Student General expectations about online class delivery and the development of student competencies were also examined. The authors premised that students' perceptions in their acquisition of the general academic and intrapersonal skills do not significantly differ.

The findings of this study will provide more ideas on how else teaching and learning can be enhanced if virtual classes are conducted as a norm or if a situation calls for it. Moreover, the findings can serve as bases in designing a curriculum that would still enhance students' outcomes even when the delivery is remote, face-to-face, or blended.

2. METHODS

The study is an exploratory, quantitative study to determine the perceptions of the students and teachers as regards the attainment of general outcomes. An English-language research instrument was used to collect the data. Data were retrieved from more than 1,000 undergraduate students from different programs in a private higher education institution (HEI). Students who were enrolled in online courses during the COVID-19 pandemic were requested to complete the survey, and the data were processed using convenience sampling.

This study is a one-year cross-sectional survey of students enrolled for a year under remote teaching and learning delivery mode. Classes may be delivered asynchronously or synchronously by the faculty. Asynchronous and synchronous classes were scheduled and usually indicated in the course modules. During asynchronous classes, students had self-directed learning at their own pace, while synchronous classes were interaction time with teachers and classmates. Modules are usually provided either at the beginning of the semester or before each term commences.

The instrument used in this study contains general statements about students' perceptions of the extent of attainment of student outcomes in two categories: academic and intrapersonal skills. Question about students' general expectations about the delivery of online classes and the development of their competencies was also asked. The general outcomes are also the expected competencies students acquire before getting the degree. These include research skills, writing skills, critical thinking and problem-solving ability, use of technology, the ability of moral and spiritual advocacy, community and collaborative engagement, understanding the content or topic, self-independence in academic tasks, creativity and innovation, and multicultural skills.

Statements for the survey questionnaire were developed by the researchers. Ten items were asked using a 7-point Likert scale. Prior to conducting this study, the research team pilot-tested the survey instrument among the graduating students, with 0.81 Cronbach Alpha. Revisions were implemented on the general outcomes before they were utilized by virtually all college students.

A total of one thousand, one hundred and forty-eight (1,148) respondents from St. Dominic College of Asia in Bacoor, Cavite, Philippines, answered the survey using Microsoft Forms. Students rated the general statements about their

perceived attainment of the general attributes when teaching and learning are delivered remotely or virtually. Said questionnaire was administered at the end of the first and second semesters of the Academic Year 2020-2021.

Statistical treatments were used after collecting the data. Weighted mean was used to determine the level of extent by which students attained the generic academic and intrapersonal skills. Meanwhile, a Levene's test for equality of variances was utilized to compare the general academic and intrapersonal skills of the students. This was done with the help of SPSS Version 25.

An open-ended question as to the general expectations of students during online classes was also asked. From the open-ended question, one hundred thirty-nine (139) responses were chosen and coded. Statements from the open-ended question were analyzed, whereas patterns and themes were formulated.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Level of Extent on Students' General Academic Skills

Table 1: Students' Generic Academic Skills

STATEMENTS	MEAN	INTERPRETATION
1. My ability to use search engines and software tools has improved.	5.40	Agree
2. My research skill has improved.	5.05	Somewhat Agree
3. My ability to think critically and solve problems has improved.	5.03	Somewhat Agree
4. My writing skill has improved.	4.93	Somewhat Agree
5. My ability to understand the content of our topics is better than before (understanding the discipline).	4.87	Somewhat Agree
OVERALL RATING	5.06	Somewhat Agree

Results showed that the majority of the respondents agreed to the statements that their ability to use search engines and software tools improved with a mean of 5.40; research skills improved with a mean of 5.05; ability to think and solve problems improved with a mean of 5.03; their writing skill improved with a mean of 4.93; and their ability to understand the content of the topics and lessons is better than before with a mean of 4.87. The results imply that the remote delivery of discussion enabled the students to use their potential in the use of technology, as evidenced in the ranking of mean scores. Said results also imply that students somewhat agreed to the statements that their research skills and critical and solving problems have improved, considering that the nature of online classes is mostly research activities.

According to Wang et al. [27], students who had previously taken online courses have more effective learning strategies; thus, they have better levels of motivation in their online subjects. A similar study by Francis et al. [28] revealed that students' prior experiences during their online learning classes might be considered in determining academic outcomes. Such academic skills help find ways to engage students in enhancing their retention and performance as regards their skills. Moreover, it allows students to foster their school belongingness and engagement and build socio-emotional and cognitive skills as a way to develop their thoughts in making their learning processes and academic achievement the best they can. This is somehow related to what Di Loreto, (2016) and Baber (2020) mentioned, that when learning and satisfaction assessments from students are merged, a more accurate picture of online learning achievement can be drawn [21,22].

3.2. Level of Extent on Students' General Intrapersonal Skills

Table 2: Students' General Intrapersonal Skills

STATEMENTS		MEAN	INTERPRETATION
1.	I become more independent in working on my academic task.	5.44	Agree
2.	I have become more creative and innovative than before.	5.09	Somewhat Agree
3.	My perspectives on multicultural advocacy become wider.	5.09	Somewhat Agree
4.	I become more conscious in community and collaborative engagement.	5.02	Somewhat Agree
5.	My moral and spiritual advocacy is better than before.	4.88	Somewhat Agree
OVERALL RATING		5.10	Somewhat Agree

Among the intrapersonal skills, students “agree” with the statement that they become more independent in working on their academic tasks, with a mean of 5.44. This implies that the online delivery of learning reinforces the abilities of the students to become more independent in their studies; thus, self-directed learning is enhanced. They somewhat agree that they have become more creative and innovative and have widened their multicultural advocacy with a mean of 5.09. Similar views are somewhat agreed by students on these outcomes: more creative and innovative than before; multicultural advocacy becomes wider; more conscious in community and collaborative engagement; and better moral and spiritual advocacy. This implies that students' intrapersonal skills have improved or continuously improved even during the pandemic or when the instruction is delivered remotely. The results supported Barrie's work in understanding general outcomes. In Barrie's study, one understanding of general outcomes is on enabling conceptions [29]. It is described as those general attributes that changed the individual and assisted the development of new knowledge [6]. According to Richardson and Swan [23], there is a high correlation between students' satisfaction with online learning and their overall perception of their learning. Marks et al. [17] stated that a successful learning experience has an immediate impact on the student, and researchers discovered that in online learning, a good indicator of student satisfaction is how positively they view their learning outcome. Ikhsan et al. [18] found that student satisfaction was influenced positively by perceived learning outcomes in the online setting. Thus, a favorable result of generic outcomes indicates favorable student satisfaction.

3. Significant Difference in Academic and Intrapersonal Skills During Online Classes

Table 3: Group Statistics Between Academic and Intrapersonal Skills during Online Classes

	VAR00002	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
VAR00005	1.00	80	5.23	.34758	.03886
	2.00	70	4.73	.56266	.06725

Table 4: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances Between Academic and Intrapersonal Skills During Online Classes

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
VAR00005	5.597	.019	6.654	148	.000	.50154	.07537	.35259	.65048
			6.457	111.877	.000	.50154	.07767	.34764	.65543

Based on the computed value of $p < 0.05$, the hypothesis is rejected. The mean scores of the two variables are different. This implies that the students' perceptions toward the attainment of general academic and intrapersonal skills are not similar.

Differences can be attributed to lacking active social engagement or the physical presence of the "actors" in the classroom- classmates and teachers, including other learning enablers.

This result corroborates with the study of Hébert and Hauf [30], which mentioned that there are students who have high civic engagement, interpersonal skills, and academic development, but they only showed greater academic development in terms of specific course concepts. Another study from Baber [22] indicated that there are no significant differences in learning outcomes or levels of satisfaction among students in an online class. Furthermore, the results pointed out that while engaging in social, interactive, and collaborative learning was a major predictor of general graduate outcomes, the acquisition of specialized knowledge also found to be significantly related to the socially interactive features of learning environments [31].

3.4. Expectations during Online Classes

Four themes emerged from the open-ended question in expectations during online classes. These are as follows:

a) **Personal Qualities.** These are the traits that define who he or she is as a person. A person's personal attributes determine how he or she will consider applying oneself to a role or task, in addition to the knowledge and skills that the person is able to bring to the workplace. Respondents repeatedly emphasized being responsible as a personal attribute and believed having the capacity to fulfill obligations on time [32]. The most important attribute that a successful student should possess is responsibility. This demonstrates that the student may be given any assignment and will do it successfully [33]. As one student said: "...I expected myself to be more responsible than before because distance learning gave me more time...manage my time properly because we are in the house we have more time to just sit and watch than to do assignments and given tasks..."

b) **Self-directed learning.** Self-directed learning is an approach in which learners take the initiative to identify their learning needs, set learning goals, find people and resources to help them learn, select and use effective learning

techniques, and evaluate their progress, thus revealing a secret to gaining new abilities and knowledge. Students came to understand that the new teaching and learning approach is typically self-directed [34]. One student emphasized this expectation: "...I can manage my time not the same way as it is in the traditional classroom setting... adjust and cope with the difficulty of online learning... independent, and maximize the effort in learning..." Another student wrote this: "...I hope to understand the lessons and to develop my analytical and comprehension skills on my own..." This study also indicated self-directed learning as something which is pursued independently and creatively. This is what a student said about it: "...as studying independently, I expect myself to do better, improve skills, and become creative and innovative in my outputs."

c) **Motivation.** Motivation is a significant motivator that the student primarily uses. Motivation explains the reasons behind his or her actions [35]. Most student respondents stated that despite the change, they were still driven to work in the new environment [36]. One student wrote, "...since I will be on my own, I should remain motivated to work in all my tasks..." Another student mentioned this: "...I do not want to get discouraged of this change. We are in difficult times, so I want myself to be tough enough to conquer these challenges."

d) **Skills Enhancement.** The new situation has opened an urgency for the enhancement of skills, particularly in technology literacy and writing skills. Although the respondents frequently use the internet and technologically related gadgets, it was during the online classes that proved a challenge to them because of the appearance of new software applications such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Blackboard, among others, in the delivery of online classes [37,38]. As what one student mentioned: "...I need to be more knowledgeable on different apps that could help me on my projects... I have realized too that I should improve my writing skills..." The new situation awakened the students to improve their skills in technology and in communication, particularly in writing, since most of the requirements were laden with paper works.

5. CONCLUSION

General competencies expected of students have been defined and assessed in detail. Most of the students perceived that their academic skills had improved. Among those skills, the use of search engines and software tools was rated highest. The results imply that the remote delivery of discussion enabled the students to use their potential in the use of technology, as evidenced in the ranking of mean scores. Said results also imply that students moderately agreed with the statement that their research skills and critical and solving problems have improved since the nature of online classes is mostly research activities. When specific pedagogical strategies such as active learning techniques and group activities are applied, general skills can be cultivated. Activities such as the use of search engines and software tools can be considered forms of active learning as well.

Among the intrapersonal skills, students "agree" to the statements they become more independent in working on their academic tasks than before. This implies that the online delivery of learning reinforces the abilities of the students to become more independent in their studies. In other words, self-directed learning is enhanced. They somewhat agree that they become more creative and innovative and have wider multicultural advocacy. Similar views are somewhat agreed by students on these outcomes: more creative and innovative than before; multicultural advocacy becomes wider; more conscious in community and collaborative engagement; and better moral and spiritual advocacy than before. This implies that students' intrapersonal skills have improved during the pandemic, even when the instruction is delivered remotely. It is recommended that curriculum developers provide more activities that can further enhance both the academic and

intrapersonal competencies of students.

Students' perceptions of the attainment of general academic and intrapersonal skills indicated a significant difference. It stipulated further that the attainment of students' academic competencies is independent of the acquisition of their intrapersonal competencies. Moreover, themes that emerged implied that students were able to examine the level of their general outcomes, both in academic and intrapersonal skills. The researchers recommend that teachers' competencies in relation to similar outcomes should be studied further to determine the concordance of students' outcomes. Moreover, an institution may design activities that have balanced content for both general academic and intrapersonal outcomes to be able to attain holistic development of students. The researchers recommend that more activities should be given priority to the development of academic outcomes, particularly writing skills and topics that are discipline-related, which can be used as a springboard to writing improvements. Collaborative concept mapping can be one of the activities to plan for students' ideas and thoughts in building for a certain project. Students can do 'free writes' to express their thoughts quickly (preferably within five to ten minutes) without interruptions (e.g., what they like or understand about the topic, how the topic finds difficult to them).

General outcomes constitute many skills that are implemented to varying degrees. There is a need to conduct further studies in recognizing the degree of implementation of each skill and its effects on student outcomes. In this way, the institution would be able to provide greater knowledge and understanding in different situations and for students to realize the attainment of its vision, mission, and goals considering that the essential competencies is important. Moreover, it should be developed to enable a holistic evaluation of both academic and intrapersonal outcomes.

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