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#### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Positive and Negative Lessons from Hidden Curriculum at a Philippine State University

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**Background/purpose** – Little attention is being put forward to the lesser-known type of curriculum—that is, hidden curriculum—most especially in the Philippine context. This study explored the positive and negative lessons from the hidden curriculum in higher education, with a Philippine state university as the research setting.

**Materials/methods** – This study used qualitative case study. The data were obtained using online focused interviews and focus group discussions from Filipino college students. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

**Results** – For the positive lessons, college students implicitly imbibed the value of being compassionate. They also acquired behaviors and attitudes that are healthy for the development of their personality. Seeing that many people helped each other, they also learned to collaborate with people. For the negative lessons, college teachers acted as a cause of academic discord. They also were reported to have a lack of sympathy toward student circumstances. Toxic behavior, collective cheating, and high-pressure work environment were observed.

**Conclusion** – If there is a group of people, such as in the university setting, there must be a hidden curriculum. By that, we pertain that the social environment always offers a hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum offers both positive and negative lessons. Observed or not, it is impactful to students and other stakeholders. Further, the development of hidden curriculum undergoes an iterative cycle—hidden curriculum influences the collective, then the collective influences the hidden curriculum, *ad infinitum*.

**Keywords** – Hidden curriculum, college students, implicit learning, academic procrastination, collective cheating, personal development.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The traditional curricula were once a technical process of learning that set the bar for education to push through and expand, a foundation that paves way for change and innovation to present itself. But as the ripple of time continues to move forward, people began to wonder for ways to enable the ease of learning. The progressive view embraces the changes that often result in better opportunities for curriculum to develop and prosper. It keeps getting better, giving new ways and redefining the once constant culture of education.

As new technologies continue to innovate, educational institutions have always been in the rush to keep up with the gradual demands of the 21st century. This in turn has allowed the masses to conceive notions largely focusing on the context of curriculum. Curriculum is broadly defined as the blueprint for achieving objectives in a school setting (Egan, 2014). When talking about this particular aspect, the first idea that many people come to mind is about the explicit curriculum which, from the term itself, pertains to something that can be grasped explicitly. However, little attention is being put forward to the lesser-known type of curriculum—that is, the hidden curriculum.

Higher educational institutions have played a crucial role in influencing the behavior of those belonging to them. Students are able to have their behavior shaped, changed, and affected by the behavioral pattern they were exposed to. In essence, hidden curriculum is derived from implicit learning. Implicit learning is generally observed when people discover the structure of the situations they are immersed in. It is the learning of various information incidentally acquired without awareness of what has been learned (Seger, 1994).

Tracing its historical roots, the term hidden curriculum is understood to first originated in Jackson's *Life in Classrooms*. There, he explains that there were some things that were being taught that could not be found in the books (Jackson, 1968). This was followed up by Miller and Seller (1990) who refined the definition of hidden curriculum as a varied range of unspoken or unstated values, behaviors, procedures, and norms that constantly exist in several areas of the educational setting. While such expectations are not explicitly planned, written, or taught in any standard class procedure, the hidden curriculum is the undisclosed lessons, principles, and perspectives that students learn in their institutions.

The concept of hidden curriculum is based on the understanding that students learn lessons in school which may or may not be related to the formal course of study (Raissi-Ahvan et al., 2021). Hence, the influence of schools is not limited to what is stipulated in their handbook and other documents. Given that schools are a social institution (Çubukçu, 2011), the acquisition of various beliefs, norms, and even skills that are not even intended to be carried out are inevitable. As such, hidden curriculum encompasses a variety of potential intellectual, social, cultural, and environmental factors which may lead to several issues (Alsubaie, 2015). Mainly, the issue is caused by the informal co-occurring assumptions and expectations within the learning environment (Alsubaie, 2015).

There have been numerous studies of hidden curriculum in the past that have been garnered in an international setting. For instance, Giroux and Penna (1979) cemented that the potential effect of the system evaluation—which focuses on recognizing what is taught and evaluated both academically and non-academically—has made the nature of hidden curriculum nowhere to be clearly revealed. Hafferty and Franks (1994) stated in their study that socialization and exposure to hidden curriculum start even before students formally enter school; however, the goals and substance of the formally offered courses may often be at odds with what is obtained in the hidden curriculum. Lastly, Margolis et al. (2001)

mentioned that even though the goals are still different, the traditions of hidden curriculum are still the same: education is a tool for stratification and differentiation that holds the secrets to valuable cultural features.

Studies about hidden curriculum in the Philippine setting are relatively an untouched area in the field of education. However, some scholars ventured into this scholarly terrain. For example, Gunio and Fajardo (2018) initiated a study that evaluated the impact of hidden curriculum on the character development of preschool pupils. Porlares and Tan (2021), in their study, presented a notion that hidden curriculum does not only reflect on student performance and their learning process but also the difficulty of teachers and stakeholders involved. Meanwhile, Ortega et al. (2022) reveal that, in terms of hidden curriculum, there is an outgrowth of both positive and negative elements in the new normal learning set-up.

*Research problem.* As stated above, studies of hidden curriculum in the Philippine setting have been scarce. A possible implication of this is that hidden curriculum is a commonly neglected component of curriculum given its implicit nature, and the absence of concrete methods of understanding and analyzing this curriculum (Gunio, 2021). There were specific attempts that have been made to analyze hidden curriculum within institutions; however, with an unestablished methodology, it was difficult (Tekian, 2009).

Despite the difficulties, it is important that the hidden curriculum be uncovered in educational institutions for they have a cogent influence not only on students but also on other members of the institutions. With this, our overarching aim is to explore the positive and negative lessons from the hidden curriculum in higher education, using a state university in the Philippines as the research setting.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

*Research design.* We used a qualitative approach to exploring the hidden curriculum at the participant university. As a tradition of inquiry, we utilized a qualitative case study in this research. We focused on obtaining information exclusively from the participant university which also limits the scope to others. According to Yin (2013), a case study strives for inductive reasoning to discover the unexplored occurrence. Therefore, in venturing this needs to come with an interplay between the interviewers and interviewees engaged in step-by-step guidelines to conduct and attain the coherency and workable relationship, in forming a mechanism to determine the design components (Maxwell, 2012). We found the qualitative case study appropriate because it deals with the complexity of the phenomenon and does not reduce insights to misleading simplicity. The limitation of a qualitative case study is it cannot be generalized to other contexts.

*Participants.* The participants of this study involved 23 women and 13 men, for a total of 36 participants. Their age ranged from 18 to 22 years old, with an average of 19.72. The following inclusion criteria were utilized: (1) 18 years old and above; (2) able to read and write; (3) able to use English and Filipino language; (4) student of the participant university; and (5) voluntarily participated in the interview and consented to the recorded session. Furthermore, the following exclusion criteria were applied: (1) below 18 years old, (2) not from the participant state university (3) obliged to participate (4) with compensation. Open-ended questions were used in the focused interviews (FI) and focus group discussions (FGD). We recorded each session after their consent. We also utilized Republic Act 11073 “The Data Privacy Act” as the basis for the data privacy procedure. In the same vein, we used pseudonyms to promote the confidentiality of the participants.

*Data generation.* We generated qualitative data by conducting focused interviews and focused group discussions using online platforms like Google Meet and Zoom. A focused interview is an approach to discovering the participants' responses and analyzed by the researchers (Merton & Kendall, 1946). On the other hand, a focus group discussion is a method used by researchers to mutually question a group of participants (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990). Following these data-gathering techniques, we explored the hidden curriculum of the participant university. These approaches allowed us to clarify their responses (Johnson et al., 2020). We did not impose any time limit in the conduct of data generation, instead, we just adhered to the principle of data saturation. Moreover, we utilized convenience sampling wherein we chose participants who were readily accessible (Etikan et al., 2016). The study has been made possible through the cooperation of our colleagues. Responses were collected from the month of April to May 2022.

*Data analysis.* We used thematic analysis to make sense of the data generated. It is a commonly used technique for analyzing, evaluating, and interpreting data in the realm of social sciences (Terry et al., 2017). It is a step-by-step process that uses the collected data to produce results in a qualitative undertaking. Therefore, we found thematic analysis fitting for this study. Alhojailan (2012) also mentioned that the said method is the most suitable approach in a study that seeks to discover through the use of interpretations. Many social science researchers used the same data analysis. For example, Poola and colleagues (2021) utilized thematic analysis to uncover the hidden curriculum that affects their participants' professional identity. Similarly, Anis et al. (2018) employed thematic analysis also to identify the challenges faced by their participants in achieving quality education.

In this study, we followed the six steps of the thematic analysis presented by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, we (1) understood and familiarized ourselves with the data. Then (2) we developed codes, and (3) looked into potential themes. Subsequently, we (4) analyzed them, and (5) gave official names and descriptions. Lastly, we (6) presented the findings.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After collecting responses, we used thematic analysis to interpret and analyze the data. Seven themes emerged. Three from positive and four from negative: For the positive lessons, this study revealed (1) compassion; (2) personality development; and (3) collaboration. Meanwhile, for the negative lessons, we acquired (4) college teachers' misbehavior; (5) social deviance; (6) procrastination; and (7) pressure.

**Table 1.** Positive and Negative Lessons from Hidden Curriculum

Themes	Subthemes
POSITIVE	
Compassion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Empathy</li> <li>● Understanding</li> <li>● Harmonious relationship</li> </ul>
Personality Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Responsibility</li> <li>● Communication</li> <li>● Risk-taking</li> </ul>
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Solidarity</li> <li>● Healthy competition</li> <li>● Connection</li> </ul>
NEGATIVE	

College Teachers' Misbehavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Insensitivity</li> <li>● Inconsistency</li> </ul>
Social Deviance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Toxic behavior</li> <li>● Backstabbing</li> <li>● Collective cheating</li> </ul>
Procrastination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● College teachers' inconsideration</li> <li>● <i>Bahala na</i> mentality</li> <li>● Workplace procrastination</li> </ul>
Pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Unrealistic standards and expectations</li> <li>● Self-doubt</li> <li>● Institutional pressure</li> </ul>

### Theme 1: Compassion

This theme pertains to the compassion of people inside the university that students implicitly learned. According to Strauss and colleagues (2016), compassion is defined as awareness toward others' misery as it becomes an impetus for them to be personally affected, making them conduct an action to provide support. College students were not deliberately taught by their teacher, peers, classmates, or other people in the university how to be compassionate but rather they just personally observed, experienced, and learned it.

*Empathy.* The ability to “wear the shoes of others” is apparent in the participants' responses. Forming an in-depth relationship with others—through observation and understanding, awareness, and intrapersonal reflection—is essential for the growth of individuals (Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017). Hence, adopting this trait that enables oneself to possess a deeper understanding of other people to respond carefully and appropriately to a scenario is imperative to ensure that these individuals are competent enough to provide careful reflection in their future.

*“When I met him [a professor] the second time around... he made me realize that when it comes to learning or trying to study, you don't compare how fast you've learned from other people.... I learned and realized that because of him.”* (Heart, 21)

Mascaro et al. (2020) show that compassion can sometimes lead to negative implications such as emphatic distress, which refers to an experience that causes unsettling feelings when empathizing with others (Eva, 2017). Therefore, having a feeling of understanding toward something and being affected by it is not always good, but sometimes produces negative results. However, the responses show that instead of feeling anxious and overwhelmed by their peers—through compassion, they became motivated and inspired to keep going.

*“...Because if one, does it, why cannot I? And also, the assurance of camaraderie or reciprocity... Like if one can do, all of us can, without pulling others downward [but rather pulling each other] upward.”* (Dickens, 21)

*“...It's setting aside our pride and competition to help others or our classmates. It's like reverse crab-mentality. In our section, we always help each other..., because we want to graduate without leaving anyone behind.... Setting aside competition for the sake of others....”* (Shakespeare, 21)

*Understanding.* Being able to assess and respond carefully with understanding to a certain situation is also evident from the participants' responses. Because college teachers and other people in the university understood their personal struggles, they learned to practice it as it became a reason for them to possess such a trait.

*"[In] my situation, during the first year, my aunt was sick, and I needed to take care of her.... But, when I told him [a college teacher] about my situation, he was open-minded and allowed me to submit a task beyond the deadline.... Then, I learned to emulate that, also. I am currently a leader of action research and one of our groupmates had a problem, I learned how to be considerate to her...."* (Bronte, 19)

Murphy-Shigematsu (2018) claims that without compassion, people have no essence in life even though they are successful professionals. Therefore, being compassionate toward other people is indispensable for having a better life. Being able to feel other people's feelings and having the drive to lend a hand is a human nature that leads to a meaningful life. Murphy-Shigematsu (2018) continues that the ability to connect with other people, accompanied by the capacity to understand, helps oneself in finding their identity, meaning, and connection to the world; this can help one better understand the path they are venturing toward global responsibility.

*"The positive influence I learned from my teachers is that they are allowing us to explore ourselves or our youth. I learned also to be humble; to take our time in everything we do; in everything I do.... they are constantly reminding us [of] our purpose in taking this course.... They are always reminding us it is always for the people."* (Alcott, 19)

Estrada et al. (2021) show that, in order to build a socially sustainable organization, it is important to hone future professionals who are compassionate. It is also necessary for teachers to be compassionate because they serve as role models to their students. A simple yet kind gesture of a teacher contributes to the knowledge of students. Such a gesture can help students learn the value of being compassionate. They learn to be kind and mindful of others' suffering (Pommier & Tóth-Király, 2020).

*Harmonious relationships.* Compassion leads to harmonious relationships with others. This is reflected through the responses of participants that show they learned and adopted such a trait. With the aid of compassion from other individuals, they learned how to form friendly and healthy relationships with the people inside the university.

*"The positive influence contributed by my classmates and other people in the university is being friendly, [for] they helped me to gain strong determination and they assist me on how to develop a healthy relationship with others".* (Woolf, 19)

Learning compassion is also relevant to having a positive outlook in life, especially amid the challenges people currently face. Nalipay and Alfonso (2018) found out those students who possess compassion not only for others but also for themselves, despite their failures and shortcomings more likely have a better point of view in achieving their goals in life. Therefore, compassion not only encompasses other people but it also includes one's personal relevance.

While college students' responses reflect that having compassion is not explicitly taught to them, they learned compassion through observation and personal experiences displayed by their teachers, peers, and other people in the university. They perceived compassion as a

positive and important human attribute. Since they were surrounded by compassionate people, they wanted to do the same.

### *Theme 2: Personal Development*

This theme is about the personal development lessons which the participants learned in the university, though they were not taught explicitly. Personal development, from the term itself, pertains to improving oneself or one's personality. Though the term can encompass a variety of lessons and activities, personal development here focuses on responsibility, communication, and risk-taking.

*Responsibility.* Many participants learned the value of responsibility in the university. Waddock and Bodwell (2004) convey responsibility is "taking blame or accepting accountability for activities and actions." It is about having a commitment to the tasks assigned to an individual and being accountable for its consequences. Responsibility is important virtues that must be cultivated not only by students but by all people to accomplish a task or fulfill duties properly. By and large, responsibility is not taught explicitly in universities like how grammar is discussed. The participants got to understand and learned its importance through the actions of their surroundings. While some emulated their college teachers in terms of being responsible, others claimed that they were taught to become responsible forcefully.

*"...I can recall last semester, there was a professor that I was afraid of because he was posting many activities and tasks. I realized that it was not good for me to keep thinking negatively or just complain, so I decided to become more responsible and diligent in my tasks. I learned how to organize my schedule, become mindful of my time, and apply time-boxing in my tasks."* (Woolf, 19)

Students are not treated like children anymore—the university sets high expectations through the persona of firm college teachers, hectic schedules, and tight deadlines. All these became an impetus for many participants to become responsible. They learned to be punctual in classes, finish academic tasks, and study independently, bearing in mind the consequences if they will become reckless in their studies. These skills are of crucial importance not only in the university but also outside the school premises. Hence, learning responsibility in the university can be considered an advantage. Without responsibility, students can get low grades or worse can even be expelled.

*"Professors are responsible for following the schedule. Because of that, I also learned to be responsible by strictly following our schedule without being late. Because of their good behavior, it feels like they are also teaching it to us even though they are not saying or advising it directly to us..."* (Christie, 20)

*Communication.* Another attribute that the participants learned in the university is to become communicative. Communication is one of the 21st-century skills that is needed in both schools and in the workplace. Ahmad (2016) affirms that communication is significant for relationships in a society and for the transformation of thoughts and humanity. In school, if a student fails to communicate their ideas, it has a detrimental effect on their academic performance. The same logic goes in the workplace—if an employee does not know how to communicate their concerns to the higher authorities, this can lead to inefficiency or even expulsion from the organization. Therefore, communication must be cultivated if one wants to succeed.

A sizable portion of participants relayed that, in the university, they learned to become communicative, majorly, from their surroundings which include their peers, classmates, and schoolmates. They described themselves as “reticent”, “shy”, and “introverted”. Hence, they were not used to participating in discussions. Before university, they were satisfied with just listening passively. However, they explained that things changed because they saw that communication increasingly became crucial for them to thrive in the university. They observed that people were speaking confidently, asserting their beliefs, and sharing their ideas. While some utilized observation to learn how to communicate well, others tried experimentation and asked for help from their peers.

*“My classmates taught me how to express myself more. I am the type of person who’s not quite good at expressing me. I’ve always considered myself to be a reserved person since I don’t talk that much, and I often keep my opinions to myself. But I have recently become more open and expressive of my thoughts. I have been enabling myself to be open to many things as well as to allow my voice to reach out to people...”* (Maurier, 19)

*Risk-taking.* Some participants pinpointed they learned risk-taking in the university. Tulloch and Lupton (2003) define risk-taking as an “activity in which individual engage, are perceived by them to be in some sense risky but is undertaken deliberately and from choice” (pp. 10-11). Though it is not part of the formal curriculum, they went outside of their shell and left their comfort zone. Some joined extracurricular clubs, while others pursued tasks that were new to them. They did that because were craving to see more of themselves. Risk-taking is a necessary skill in school and in life, because if one just stays in a comfortable arena without exerting effort to dare in the unknown even though it can help them improve, then their capacity to grow will be slow. The willingness to take risks, though failure may happen, can help one see their potential (Gage, 2012).

Though they did not feel confident or fully equipped, they joined organizations, spoke in front of people, and started to undertake bold projects. Despite the fear and anxiety, they acted because they had aspirations they wanted to attain. Because of that, they learned more, met new people, and improved their skills. If they just wished and not acted at all, nothing would have happened.

*“Despite my lack of journalistic experience, I eventually learned the ropes to helm our college publication...and despite my introverted nature, I was able to express my communicative competence, gaining commendations from my peers and mentors whenever I give a presentation....All these things happened because I dared myself and because I saw many people daring themselves, too. The chief lesson is that it is essential to put yourself out there, facing the world head-on, to progress and succeed in life.”* (Twain, 21)

Overall, the development of personal attributes is learned, even without direct instruction from college teachers. Students can learn attitudes and behaviors that develop personality from their interactions and the people in the university’s environment. Particularly, college students learned values like responsibility, communication, and risk-taking, despite these values were not exemplified in the explicit curriculum. This is a manifestation of a positive influence that an external force can do on individuals.

### *Theme 3: Collaboration*

This theme talks about how college students implicitly learned the value of collaboration in the academe through experience and observation. Marinez-Moyano (2006) defines



collaboration as “a process between individuals working together to complete a task or achieve a mutual goal.” In life, it is natural to encounter countless perspectives, ideas, and opinions from other people. Hence, it is appropriate that one learns how to deal with them.

Collaboration requires the ability to collaborate and express ideas well with others. According to Johnson (2013), collaboration improves students’ self-management, leading to increased academic achievements. While many college teachers instill the value of collaboration in the classroom, a greater number of the participants shared that they acquired the value of collaboration mainly from their fellow classmates’ actions.

*“The positive influence that I adapted from my classmates is teamwork...at all times; we help each other not only with the activities but also with our personal matters. I learned companionship even though my friends did not teach me to communicate with them, to build good relationships with them because it goes naturally.”* (Dickinson, 19)

*Solidarity.* A sizeable portion of participants pinpointed the presence of solidarity in the participant university. Solidarity, as defined by the Merriam-Webster (n.d.), is “the awareness of shared interests...creating a psychological sense of unity of groups or classes.” Solidarity is an important characteristic that must be present in any collaborative undertaking. Otherwise, the members of the group would go in various directions; as a consequence, the group will not be able to achieve its goal. College students shared that, through solidarity, they were able to overcome challenges in college. They were united as a group, leading to working properly with them.

*“...A sense of solidarity plays a crucial role in overcoming a myriad of challenges present in college life. Also, I found that it has improved my holistic college experience, particularly when working with fellow students...”* (Thoreau, 21)

With solidarity, activities became meaningful for college students. This also helped them establish networks in college life, providing them with a vivid experience. They described that since college itself tends to be an overwhelming experience, they needed a sense of solidarity to overcome challenges. Solidarity made them understand that, though there are varied members and tasks, all of these still will boil down to the goal of the group. Through this, college students felt a sense of belonging and trusted that others would be with them in the midst of hardships. Solidarity is a key to effective collaboration, which is a prerequisite to any successful undertaking.

*Healthy competition.* Some participants claimed that they learned about healthy competition in the university. By healthy competition, they refer to viewing other students not as enemies, but as people who can inspire challenge. Healthy competition is an important variable of collaboration as this inspires people to do their best and to deal with others. Furthermore, the participants also claimed that, through healthy competition, they learned to cope with the fear of admitting that they needed help. In addition, healthy competition not only helps in developing the students’ self-discipline and ethics, but it also encourages them to develop new abilities and approaches and better themselves.

*“From the people I interact with on campus, I learned to view my classmates as competitors. They are people that I know who can challenge me to become better, but at the same time, they are the ones who I can depend and rely on...”* (Camus, 20)

The participants claimed that shifting from toxic competition to healthy competition in an educational setting can make students flourish. The unhealthy competition focuses on the importance of winning among their competitors, while healthy competition encompasses the necessary need of students for teamwork and positive participation. As Zhang & Lee (2020) accentuated, “healthy competition drives productivity and growth among students, spurring them to strive to learn and improve.”

*Connection.* Generally, participants learned in the participant university are the importance of connection, especially in alignment with collaboration. Connection explores the idea that people are interrelated with one another. As these students unconsciously tried to fit in to the society, particularly in the participant university, they naturally adapted into the environment and tried to develop themselves into either better or similar shape as those around them. Through this, they felt the connection with other people.

“... I was able to connect with some of the alumni who helped us in the event, but also I was able to learn new things in the journalism area...” (Twain, 21)

Collaboration cannot be started, in the first place, without connection. Even the mentioned subthemes would not be born without the value of connection. College students felt a sense of belonging after establishing a connection with one another, and the feeling of being identical to the family they made within the university. To elucidate, the connection is one of what makes the students unconsciously acquire the hidden curriculum from other people.

Overall, college students learned the value of collaboration from the people that surrounded them, majorly from their fellow students. They observed that collaboration should have characteristics like solidarity, healthy competition, and connection. Furthermore, hidden curriculum has played two parts in this context. First, college students acquired collaboration through firsthand experience and observation. Second, they were able to conform to the participant university because of collaboration, which according to Markus (1978), is highly influential on an individual’s behavior.

#### *Theme 4: College Teachers’ Misbehavior*

This theme reports the participants’ experience of the apparent misbehavior exhibited by their college teachers. The lack of consistency and sensitivity causes college students to be demotivated and to experience various negative feelings. College students’ engagement is shown to be adversely affected by the misbehavior displayed by their college teachers. It is vital to acknowledge that they hindered students from fully achieving the value of self-expression. The ill-mannered remarks and behavior of college teachers debilitate meaningful learning experiences.

*Insensitivity.* The majority of the participants pinpointed the offensive remarks and behaviors of college teachers to the extent they already cross personal boundaries, manifesting insensitivity. Offensive misbehaviors of college teachers are marked by verbal aggressiveness, insults, and hurtful messages (Valverde & Myers, 2014). It reportedly lessens the students’ motivation and enthusiasm to communicate with their teachers (Goodboy et al., 2010). Hence, the insensitivity of college teachers can lead to emotional distance and instilled disapproval. Furthermore, the following responses support the claims:

*“What I’ve observed negatively from my teachers is...how they become too strict with us....The way how they give feedback or respond to our questions is kind of insensitive. It makes us feel that we are not competent enough to understand the lessons and the feeling we feel when they give feedback lingers. That’s the reason why sometimes, we are afraid to ask questions. Instead of helping us, it feels like we are being scolded.”* (Hemingway, 20)

Because of the insensitive remarks of the college teachers, college students avoided asking questions and expressing their authentic feelings. They feared that college teachers would just scold or humiliate them. This shows the lack of psychological safety in the participant university. Further, this unmannered treatment results in losing students’ appetite to appreciate learning. In turn, students will not be able to have a sense of fulfillment in what they do. As that fear becomes imprinted in their mind, students will not be open, which leads to non-participation in class discussions.

*“This year, during our online classes, I inquired questions to an instructor and she responded angrily. I also sent my important message to her. Unfortunately, she didn’t reply to it. Therefore, I decided to approach another professor to ask for help, to no avail.”* (Hurston, 19)

*Inconsistency.* Based on the participants, college teachers were inconsistent in following their own rules and in using deserving positive remarks to students. All of this reportedly lessened college students’ motivation. College teachers’ misbehavior leads to general student ineffectiveness (Goodboy, 2011). Another point worth noting was the misbehavior of college teachers among participants:

*“Last semester, I had a professor who I did not like at all. I was the president of the class at that time, and I did not like him because of the way he treated us. He said he’d be fair and on time with everything but that’s not what we experienced. For instance, during our second semester, some classmates of mine were on the brink of not being able to enroll because he did not encode their grades on time. As a president, I contacted him on various platforms to no avail....I was so angry at him because no matter how I tried to communicate with him, he wouldn’t communicate back.”* (Orwell, 21)

Many college teachers were reported as late in giving grades, though they insisted that college students must not be late in submitting tasks. Plus, while college teachers promised to attend to their needs, college students experienced neglect and unfair treatment. This shows a disconnect between what college teachers say and what they do. It made college students question their integrity. College students knew that such inconsistency is not a good example; hence, they shared feelings of frustration, irritation, and even anger about the situation.

*“I observed some rules, instead of empowering us, refrain us from fully expressing ourselves. Plus, some rules can easily be broken by them and not by us. For example, we can’t submit our work late, but they can give us grades late. Then, we’re forbidden to talk using derogatory statements, but they’re allowed. That’s not fair!”* (Morrison)

Overall, observed by college students was the misbehavior of college teachers. They even felt its negative effects. While many college teachers commonly tell their students to behave well, it was found that the former also exemplifies insensitive behavior. This is ironic because teachers are known to be approachable and empathetic (Hattie & Yates, 2014). Moreover, the inconsistency among their college teachers put forward the notion they were not faithful to their own words, or proverbially, “not walking the talk.” As a consequence, college

students avoid asking questions, lose motivation, and even hold strong emotions toward their college teachers.

#### *Theme 5: Social Deviance*

This theme deals with social deviance, particularly those that participants implicitly learned in academia. Social deviance refers to actions or behaviors that violate social norms, and it has existed for as long as societies and norms have existed in human history (Aftab, 2020). Social norms can be explicit or implicit, formal or informal, and violations of these norms can range anywhere from serious legal crimes to benign violations of etiquette (Goode, 2015). Through official and informal social control, all civilizations have devised mechanisms to manage social deviance. Philosophers, sociologists, ethicists, and criminologists, among others, have paid close attention to how societies wield their authority for control (Goode, 2015). Despite such safeguarding, many social deviances continue to persist even in many universities and colleges.

*Toxic behavior.* Many participants conveyed that they have experienced toxic behavior among themselves, their college teachers, and the university culture. Such experiences from the mentioned social interactions are “toxic” to students’ health and well-being in that it causes them distress, among other adverse effects. Moreover, there is also an apparent tendency for students to emulate toxic behavior as they seem to believe that it is standard practice or an informally-accepted coping mechanism from the social hindrances manifested in academia. This clearly aligns with Cornejo’s (2020) assertion that in an effort to manage stress, in this case, one that is rooted in toxic experiences within the university, students either engage in maladaptive behaviors or implement coping mechanisms.

Several participants also noted a similar instance regarding the culture of competition within any given university. This ranges from the classroom to academic and non-academic organizations and their respective activities. Albeit pressure and competition are acceptable to some extent for progress to occur, there are times wherein the limit to where this is still generally considered “healthy” for scholarly and personal pursuits is only vaguely inferred. Consequently, this also gives rise to the perilous effects of school and even organizational politics in that students may inevitably behave as a collective. Also, this can have both positive and negative implications with the latter leading to a tendency to resort to groupthink, which Hartzell (2022) describes as the “occurrence of when a group makes faulty or ineffective decisions for the sake of reaching a consensus.”

Groupthink is said to inhibit individual creativity and independent thinking among group members. The potential damage this might cause to the entire group, as a collective thinking and behaving body, is severe, particularly in the context of subgroups within academia. For instance, it can ruin a reputation, and professional working relationships, among others. This can apply to the most minute subsections, such as cliques and smaller non-academic clubs, to a larger scale, like the reputation and branding of any given organization or affiliates of the university, even the university itself. Wilde, 20, observed an aggressive culture of competition within the university, citing instances of political smear campaigns during a student council election season. Although he claimed that he does not participate in such culture, its manifestation within the academe is nonetheless toxic.

*"I witnessed some of my classmates become bullies and sarcastic; they seem to have forgotten how to respect one another because they tend to judge any person, talking behind his back." (Woolf, 19)*

*"About the toxic culture, more specifically the cancel culture that is present in our state university ...the amount of stories I've heard about people making up stories to fit their narrative and cost someone's reputation is too much, so widespread. Because of this, some students are more likely to practice this and are subject to do the same and cancel out people as well, because it is what they observe from the people that they hang around with..." (Poe, 19)*

*Backstabbing.* Correspondingly, many claimed to have observed backstabbing, also known as "talking behind one's back," as another common toxic behavior. While rarely intentional, it can become a norm within the classroom and university. Such behavior is considered toxic and socially deviant because it has detrimental effects on the victim of backstabbing incidents due to the toll it takes on their reputation, well-being, and lifestyle. Furthermore, it also contradicts the perpetrator's conscience in that they become accustomed to morally-erroneous behavior, emulating them and believing it to be acceptable when it is not. And while some admitted that they do not engage in such egregious behavior, they have expressed their concern and found such a status quo within the university alarming.

*"The negative influence I noticed from my classmates is speaking behind the professor's back. Because of frustrations with classwork, it has also become an avenue for venting." (Shelley, 19)*

*"I notice that many of my classmates talk behind our professor's back. There are instances that I also have adapted it because some of my classmates do it. It feels like I feel boosted in doing that because my classmates do the same thing. However, in my case, as a student, I know my boundaries." (Christie, 20)*

*Collective cheating.* Some participants reported a prevalence of collective cheating. Pulfrey et al. (2018) have argued that students, in certain situations, develop positive attitudes and tendencies to engage in and justify collective cheating, as opposed to individual cheating, due to group loyalty and the desire to improve the general status of the collective. Essentially, it is a form of cheating executed with and for peers.

*"On the idea that my classmates and I are not enemies in the classroom, we all deal with the same challenges; hence despite its 'immorality,' we 'helped' each other when needed, and it was certainly needed during quizzes, for instance. I understand that there is inherent competition, but one cannot deny the innate need to help one another in any sense." (Thoreau, 21)*

*"I notice that, because of online classes, we somehow began to collectively tolerate cheating practices." (Shelley, 19)*

In conclusion, toxicity, backstabbing, and collective cheating are the most common socially-deviant behavior exhibited by college students. It suggests that these acts of social deviance appear to be embedded in its collective consciousness. Therefore, a considerable number of the population displays adequate understanding and awareness of said behavior, albeit not extrinsically apparent.

### Theme 6: Procrastination

This theme talks about the experiences of college students regarding procrastination in the academic setting. Klingsieck (2013) defines procrastination as “the needless delay of things one intends to do.” Procrastination itself is not a form of an erratic impairment but a deeply ingrained pattern of behavior. However, studies have shown that approximately 95% of college students engage in procrastination to some degree, approximately 70% consider themselves to be procrastinators, and approximately 50% say that they procrastinate in a consistent and problematic manner (Steel, 2007). While being engaged in procrastination has been a common longstanding human tendency, it is worth noting that idling and cramming at the expense of doing school work for too long harbors potentially negative consequences for students that are much more evident even in an online setting (Hong et al., 2021).

*College teachers’ inconsideration.* A few of the participants shared that one main reason for students to engage in procrastination is because of their college teachers’ inconsideration. While proof of some of the faculty members’ inconsideration remains undisclosed, one research suggested that college teachers’ inconsideration begins with incivility within the faculty members and lack of university materials which cause conflict-inducing attitudes that negatively affect students’ educational and psychological outcomes (Ali et al., 2019). Woolf, 19, stated that procrastination happens when they are given “overwhelming and excessive tasks” by their college teachers. She also expressed that their insensitivity hinders the classes’ performance for they “do not consider the consequences of their actions”:

*“...Some teachers are being insensitive to students’ feelings. Some teachers nowadays are pushing or motivating their students to strive and become competitive in the classroom, but there are times that they do not consider the consequences of their actions—especially when a student’s performance isn’t improving. Sometimes, there are teachers that give advice and comments on students’ performance and, believe it or not, there are few that cannot avoid using hurtful words making them insensitive. And since they are insensitive, there’s an instance that I adapted it. Also, because of the overwhelming and excessive tasks that our teacher produce or made us do, it made me unmotivated causing me to procrastinate...”*

Shakespeare, 21, stated a similar response: “some teachers are inconsiderate.” Thus, making her “lose motivation multiple times”. Because of the multitude of tasks assigned by their “inconsiderable” college teachers, the students initially feel unmotivated, followed by an uneasy feeling of neglecting the tasks by delaying them or putting them off until the last minute, or past their deadlines.

*Bahala na mentality.* One such factor which falls under the general idea of academic procrastination, is the “come what may”, better known as, in the Philippine context, the “bahala na” mentality—an expression of a fatalistic attitude towards something or as a determined event in a challenging situation where things are risky and uncertain. The “bahala na” is often expressed by Filipino students before taking on difficult undertakings such as exams, reports or just barely making various decisions (Agustin, 2020). Furthermore, Blume, 20, cemented the negative presence of the “bahala na” habit in the academic culture when she stated “the bahala na habit wherein doing activities hastily at the last minute without checking it is an inefficient thing to do”:

*“The bahala na habit succumbs me. I do activities hastily at the last minute without checking them. It is not efficient to do, it will not have good results.”*

Blume believed that not all academic work can be accounted for or passed to fate or God. The “bahala na” has been a controversial trait that affects everyone across every demographic. While “bahala na” can presuppose positivity with some form of reinforcement of effort and responsibility, it can also be seen as negativity if it is left in neglect (Gripaldo, 2005).

*Workplace procrastination.* Lastly, while students are mostly perceived to harbor some form of procrastination or laziness, the same can be said for the faculty of the university. In a study conducted by Nguyen et al. (2013), approximately 25% of adults consider procrastination to be a defining personality trait for them. In this sense, when college teachers tend to procrastinate or fail to meet their deadlines, it becomes a reflection for students to reenact upon. However, such consequences can be brought upon by revolving factors such as the administrators themselves. Bronte, 19, stated that she “had this professor who would just read things on the PowerPoint, then she’d give an abundance of tasks... It is an ugly sight as she did not put enough effort into it.”:

*“I had this professor who would just read things on the Powerpoint, and then she’d give an abundance of tasks. It’s an ugly sight. She’s not putting effort. It made me think, though negative, that might as well, I’d do that when I’m gonna teach in the future. The effect of that is students won’t be able to learn unless they would self-study.”*

It is worth noting that the term “academic procrastination” can be occasionally used to describe those who work in the academe. However, the term “academic procrastination” in this context is debatable, because while both students and the professionals who instruct them to work within the academe, they do so in different capacities, and it is generally more accurate to categorize procrastination in the academic professional at work as “workplace procrastination.” (Laybourne et al., 2019).

#### *Theme 7: Pressure*

This theme shows the different kinds of pressure that college students experienced in the participant university. These negatively affect them in varied ways such as impacting self-esteem, brought by unrealistic standards and expectations imposed by college teachers and other surrounding people. Subthemes are classified into three, namely: pressure to prove oneself; self-doubt due to pressure; and institutional pressure.

*Unrealistic standards and expectations.* Many participants shared that the participant university instills unrealistic standards and expectations. By that, it refers to giving students tasks and activities that go beyond their capacities to the extent they cannot handle them at all. As a result, they become stressed and panicky which may lead to disturbance in sleep, and incapacity to focus, and hence they’ll get low grades. According to Giray (2022), schools should advance the implementation of the “Maslow over Bloom” principle which means before any instruction or training objectives, the satisfaction of psychological and physical needs must be met; this is to produce better outcomes. Students do not get to learn properly when they are in a negative state. Therefore, educational institutions won’t get satisfactory results in terms of the business of learning if they just give an enormous number of tasks without considering students' circumstances and feelings.

*“The negative lesson I have got from the culture of the university is...unrealistic standards and expectations...Because of the overloading tasks, there are some possibilities that we can’t handle them all. The mental breakdown is too much to the point that our education is not*

*aligned with our goal as a student and the reason why we chose that school. It feels like we are only basing our performance on the school's expectations" (Woolf, 19)*

Meanwhile, some participants highlighted that the pressure coming from their environment is not healthy because it seems that they are not allowed to experience failure, given that they are studying in a well-known university. A study pinpointed students with unrealistic high social or academic expectations had lower first-year grade point averages (GPAs) than students with average or below-average expectations (Smith & Werlieb, 2005). To avoid dissatisfaction from people around them, the participants imposed on themselves high unrealistic standards so they can satisfy what people think of them. As a result, they do tasks and undertakings in the university mainly with the intention of external validation.

*"I find the pressure of constantly trying to prove something to people is negative. Because most are expecting you to achieve greater heights just because you are in this well-known university, you have to constantly remind yourself that you should get approved, that your GWA (General Weighted Average) is like impressive, that your certain attainment in life is like successful." (Poe, 19)*

*Self-doubt.* A few of the participants believed that pressure leads them to doubt themselves. Pressure has been a regulator that forces people to react according to how they take the situation. There have been numerous reports these past few years indicating that academic pressure contributes to anxiety, low self-esteem, and even suicidal idealization among students in high school and in young adults (Nguyen et al., 2019). It is an undisclosed fact that when students enter college, they experience pressure from multiple sources. Such instances include pressure from their parents to succeed, from their college teachers to perform well in class; and pressure from themselves to do well in classes. This pressure could lead to high anxiety and possibly even poor performance in classes which may result in doubting themselves (Davis, 2014). Fitzgerald, 18, mentioned that one of the main reasons for pressure-induced doubt is the fact that some of his professors are inconsiderate:

*"The pressure they are giving to students. Like the consecutive giving of activities without having a pause. And also the way they grade their students without being considerate. They're making me feel like all the efforts I've put in all those rushed activities were in vain because of the grades I believed I didn't deserve."*

While there is no basis for the inconsideration of professors, one research suggests that their class-induced inconsideration may stem from their personal struggles that impair their performance (Yariv, 2011). Dickinson, 19 said a similar response, but her pressure-induced doubt stems from the institution's "high" standards:

*"The negative lesson that I adapted from the university is because of the university's very high standard, I find it difficult sticking out to those standards... sometimes, it's hard to reach those standards and making me doubt myself."*

*Institutional pressure.* College students experience pressure from multiple sources beginning in their first year (Davis, 2014). For instance, they receive pressure from their parents, teachers, fellow students, and often themselves. However, one of the most common roots is institutional pressure, which is a form of pressure exerted by institutions. Institutions function as forces on individuals and organizations, according to Institutional Theory, a theory on the deeper and more robust parts of social structure, by producing social constraints and restrictions, and setting boundaries for what is acceptable and what is not. Pressures that are



normative, coercive, or mimetic can all have an impact (Davidsson, et al., 2006). Social constraints on organizations and their members to comply with specified norms are known as normative pressures.

Coercive pressures are generally associated with formal institutions such as regulations or laws, but they can also refer to informal demands placed on businesses (e.g., technical standards imposed by someone exerting power over another actor, as in a parent-subsidiary relationship). Mimetic pressures are requests on companies to imitate other organizations in order to deal with uncertainty. This applies to the context of the academe, revolving around processes by which structures, including schemes, rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior.

*“It’s a highly standardized culture; we all know that this university is more than a university. It’s one of the known institutions in the Philippines, and once you get in, others’ expectations will arise as well, that pressure is also gained by the learners who hold a high standard for themselves.”* (Allende, 19)

*“They expect you to meet those standards in the given time... I observe that some of our professors want us to progress quickly because they reason that we need to be competitive, or any academic load in every university that competes with our state university.”* (Dickens, 21)

The responses above, albeit limited to the context of the participant university, display manifestations of various pressures mentioned previously. There is an apparent shift in both external and internal perception and attitude toward neophyte students, and possibly others with a similar reputation. A probable reason for this is unconscious justification can be traced to the university’s reputation as a consistent producer of a competent workforce as evidenced by employers’ preference (ABS-CBN News, 2018) and exemplary performance in numerous board exams. Thus, college students perceived a palpable institutional pressure.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

We explored the hidden curriculum in the context of higher education. This study featured students’ prevailing behaviors and attitudes that are not readily apparent. Mainly characterized by norms, students appear to pick these up with ease and adapt to the university culture seamlessly. The hidden curriculum is implicitly learned. However, it remains as powerful as the explicit curriculum because it affects the students in that there are real implications. These implications are both positive and negative and were derived from the university culture, that is, the amalgamation of overall expectations and interactions of the organizational members.

For the positive, we determined that students implicitly imbibed the value of being compassionate as exemplified by their college teachers and fellow students, which contributed to the betterment of their relationships and outlook in life. They also acquired behaviors and attitudes that are healthy for the development of their personality such as they became responsible, more communicative, and open to the idea of risk-taking. Seeing that many people helped each other, they also learned to collaborate and deal with people in various projects both inside and outside the academic context; consequently, this made them appreciate the value of interdependence.

On the negative side, we discovered that college teachers acted as a source of academic discord. Existed also was an apparent lack of sensitivity toward students’ plight which, if

neglected, can debilitate student learning and engagement. Moreover, this expands to perceived social deviance practiced not only by some college teachers but also by other students and manifested through the university culture. The primary motivation behind the pervasion of social deviance, such as toxic behavior and collective cheating, is said to be driven by the general notion to fit in. As the participant university holds an esteemed reputation, its members endeavored to keep up with such a high-pressure work environment, which imposed unrealistic standards and expectations on them.

Furthermore, we contend that if there is a group of people, such as in the university setting, there must be a hidden curriculum for it is the result of the collective. By that, we pertain that the social environment always offers a hidden curriculum. This proves Lieberman's (2013) assertion that our brain automatically learns from the social environment that includes other people and how we relate to them. Observed or not, it is impactful to individuals. Further, we see the development of hidden curriculum undergoes an iterative cycle—hidden curriculum influences the collective, then the collective influences the hidden curriculum, and so on.

## 5. SUGGESTIONS

For the recommendations, we ask the participant university to pay attention to the hidden, yet real, curriculum and its influences on its stakeholders. Its administrators must strive to make it obvious so they can understand how it affects the school community. They should reinforce the positive and lessen the negative influences of hidden curriculum on students. We recommend that college teachers become more mindful of its existence and how it plays a role in the education of students. Like Ryan and colleagues (2010), we find that raising awareness on this subject may address issues related to academic and personal areas of students.

College teachers must use their actions and choice of words with prudence because students get to implicitly learn from them. Students should, likewise, have a keen sense of awareness about hidden curriculum. If they fail to do that, they unknowingly will learn negative attributes and limiting beliefs that can disempower them. We advise future researchers to extend the scope of the research to a local or national scale; utilize different research methodologies; and include university officers, and staff as participants in the next studies for they also are agents of the hidden curriculum. We hope that this study can be an inspiration to universities so they can make policies related to the subject matter and that it can spark conversations among its stakeholders.

## DECLARATIONS

**Author Contributions** LG conceptualized the study and acted as the research lead of the group. MKCA and JJ wrote the introduction. JE and SML crafted the methodology. LG and DLG composed the conclusion and recommendations. All contributed to the data generation and analysis. To ensure the collaboration and attainment of quality, online meetings were regularly conducted. There, writing, discussing, and revising this paper continually were made. Despite the busyness in their various endeavors, everyone poured out their time, effort, and intellectual juice with passion for this research undertaking.

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**Ethical Approval** The study has undergone appropriate ethics protocol.

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