Hybrid Learning Experiences of College Students with Special Education Needs

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Abstract

Higher education institutions increasingly embrace hybrid learning to offer adaptable and variable educational techniques. After the COVID-19 limits were loosened, students could now take in-person and online courses simultaneously. Students engaged in distance learning for almost three years gradually return to class. Although hybrid learning has been the subject of numerous research among typical college students, little is known about how this method of instruction affects individuals with special needs. This descriptive qualitative study examined their opinions and experiences in hybrid learning environments to close this gap. Semi-structured interviews and theme content analysis were used. This study includes students with various diagnoses, including sensory impairments, learning disabilities, physical impairments, and social, emotional, and behavioral disorders. Findings revealed that students' experiences with hybrid learning were marked by efficient learning, safe feeling, a sense of belonging, and expectation setting. College students with special education needs can benefit from efficient learning and a safe feeling. However, it presented difficulties in establishing a sense of belonging and clearly defining expectations, highlighting the need for customized approaches to satisfy their various needs.

Keywords: hybrid learning, inclusive learning, special education needs, student experiences

The transition to online education began when the COVID-19 pandemic first broke out, and limits were put in place by governments all over the world. The rapid shift has allowed educational institutions to adapt to meet the students' varied learning needs. As a result, it has been challenging to facilitate learning and meet the needs of students, and the most vulnerable, such as those with special needs, have been severely affected. Amidst this profound transformation, it has become evident that students' experiences are invaluable for shaping educational practices responsive to the impact of unexpected crises.

After the pandemic, however, teaching and learning were never the same. With the inclusion of new technology, the classroom environment has changed, pedagogical strategies are created to help students achieve their objectives, and face mask use is still required. In addition, we now understand the importance of opening up many learning avenues to respond to extreme circumstances, such as natural catastrophes on a large scale and daily disruptions of practical education (Umiyati, 2022). As a result, teaching and learning have undergone a tremendous transformation. To meet the needs of every student, many learning modalities, including online, blended, and hybrid learning, have been introduced and implemented. Although these teaching strategies are not new, they will continue to provide students with additional possibilities. Several institutions have invested in technologically advanced learning environments to maintain the continuity of teaching (Raes et al., 2020). Huggett (2022) affirms that technology-enabled learning has greatly revolutionized education and allowed new learning opportunities.

In the Philippines, De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, a Catholic tertiary institution, has opened its doors to students with this opportunity. One of the innovative pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning implemented following the pandemic to meet the demands of students is hybrid learning. This proactive approach of the college made educational experiences more accessible for all, including those with disabilities.

Hybrid learning, which incorporates digital and online teaching resources, is becoming increasingly common in institutes of higher learning and is a productive learning style (Dietz, 2022). It has changed from face-to-face institutions that aim to give students freedom and greater individualization to online institutions that understand the need to support students (Watson & Murin, 2014). Additionally, it incorporates "an element of learner's control over time, pace, path, and place" that transforms conventional teacher-to-student training into a personalized method (Watson & Murin, 2014, p. 13). College students are more likely to be more independent and in charge of their learning process because they have more developed mental processes and independent behaviors. Online learners must be motivated and self-disciplined to learn effectively (Carter Jr. et al., 2020; Jansen et al., 2020). They must manage, access, and keep an eye on their learning to take ownership of their education.

What are the differences between online, blended, and hybrid learning? Online learning is a synchronous classroom setting where students use the internet to learn while interacting with the teacher and other students (Singh & Turman, 2019). According to Graham (2006), blended learning is the "combination of face-to-face instruction with computed-mediated instruction" (p.5) or an amalgamation of on-campus and online learning. Finally, hybrid learning occurs

when teachers simultaneously instruct their students online and in conventional classrooms (Umiyati, 2022). Although some graduate schools have adopted these learning methods, they are intimidating for instructors who are used to imparting knowledge face-to-face, particularly to students with special educational needs.

The main emphasis of this study was the use of hybrid learning for students with special education needs. Studies on the effects of blended learning on students with special needs have been conducted (Alvarado-Alcantar et al., 2018; Rivera, 2017; Zavaraki & Schneider, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020), but there are not enough studies on how it affects students with disabilities. To support flexibility and inclusive learning, researchers advise creating more hybrid learning environments (Gnaur et al., 2020; Hediansah & Surjono, 2020; Li et al., 2021). Hybrid learning also enables students to participate in class activities regardless of location, making education accessible to those with disabilities. Students with disabilities may have difficulties in their academics. However, with adequate support and understanding of their conditions, they can survive the challenges of various learning modalities, such as online and on-site environments. Hence, listening to learners' experiences is crucial to providing appropriate accommodations and fostering inclusion and equity for all learners.

Research Questions

This study aimed to identify the experiences of college students with special education needs. The following research questions were explicitly addressed in this study:

1. How do college students with special education needs perceive and experience hybrid learning environments?
2. How do college students with special education needs adapt to cope with the challenges of hybrid learning?
3. How do college students with special education needs achieve the desired learning outcomes in hybrid learning?

Literature Review

Addressing Special Education Needs in Hybrid Learning

Examining the learning experiences is essential for assessing and enhancing course designs for various learners because hybrid learning is now the most popular learning mode since the pandemic. The researcher used peer-reviewed journal publications and other academic sources to examine multiple learning environments and hybrid learning study participants. Studies involving students who needed special education services were conducted sporadically compared with those involving ordinary university students. According to Dizon and colleagues (2013), students with special education needs have levels of physical-motor, cognitive, language, psychosocial, and independence significantly different from those of average, regular, or neurotypical students of their age. They may have physical limitations from birth, such as being blind, deaf, or physically disabled, which sets them apart from the general

population (Dizon et al., 2013). They could be "delayed behaviors indicating a low or undeveloped intelligence, atypical language abilities, social-emotional and self-care skills, and maturation" (Gomez & Oael, 2013, p. 13).

For neurotypical students, hybrid learning may offer flexibility and convenience, enabling them to match their academic obligations with other personal commitments. However, students with special educational needs may have difficulties with hybrid learning. For instance, children with attention or memory issues may find online understanding challenging and need more assistance and accommodations to succeed. They might also need help managing their time and more structure and direction to keep on task.

Balancing the Convenience and Challenges of Hybrid Learning

Hybrid learning is a relatively recent concept gaining popularity in higher education institutions (Bøjer & Brøns, 2022). However, hybrid learning research has frequently been conducted with regular college students. For instance, a study by Little and Jones (2020) of 135 college students studying Accounting Principles found that hybrid and online classes produce a more flexible and exciting learning environment than entirely on-site education. This effort was assisted by Smith and Schreder's (2020) study on adult learners' attention in an online course. It showed that the average attentiveness was more remarkable when students and teachers signed on to Zoom simultaneously under the hybrid format.

In contrast, a study by Gutiérrez-Braojos and colleagues (2019) utilizing 36 female undergraduate students engaged in educational research using hybrid learning showed that collaboration without rivalry in face-to-face contexts promotes excellent learning quality. Students feel less pressure to meet their learning objectives when learning with their peers in a classroom. Additionally, their face-to-face contact when working on their assignments gives them confidence as they work with other students.

Integrating Technology and Assessing Emotional Impact

According to Liu, Spector, and Ikle (2018), integrating new technologies in hybrid synchronous learning can support collaborative and individualized learning, valuable pedagogies for college students. However, adopting new technology to support learning and instruction places a responsibility on designers and educators. Additionally, the complexity and speed of technological development necessitate that our students be better prepared, quick learners, and problem solvers. Furthermore, students with learning disabilities who require extra time to complete their assignments find rapid technological development a significant obstacle. In contrast to face-to-face classrooms, Daniels and Stupnisky (2012) identified distinct emotions felt in online learning contexts. Emotions produce varied results because the learning environment is vastly different. Although professors and some students are present in the same venue, the first-year college students' experience with virtual hybrid learning was overpowering with ambiguity, functionality, and place (Olt, 2018). As a result, they occasionally felt alienated from their online lectures.

Online students' feelings of isolation might be a severe problem. For instance, some students are compelled to participate in online course sessions due to their obligations to their families and jobs. Because they have little time for their studies, these students could experience isolation, fail to interact with the course material, and drop out (Cunningham, 2014). Additionally, Francescucci and Foster (2014) found that visual anonymity can occasionally make it simpler for online students to withdraw from class conversations. In these learning situations, the issue of exclusion is therefore evident.

Similar to the previous study, Butz and colleagues (2016) examined the influence of students' emotions, perceptions of control, value, and achievement in synchronous hybrid learning environments with 118 higher education students. Although using technology to participate in their classes is initially enjoyable for students, the result implies that the novelty of the delivery method wears off over time. To involve students in technology-mediated programs, instructional designers should continuously experiment with new technologies (Hrastinski, 2008).

Bower, Lee, and Dalgarno (2017) suggest offering remote students an embodied presence in face-to-face classes by considering the pedagogical, technological, and logistical issues unachievable with traditional styles to build a collaborative virtual, hybrid learning environment. To achieve learning objectives together, remote and in-person students should feel like they are interacting naturally in the same physical place.

With these learning experiences explored in these studies, the researcher hopes to contribute important insights into the journeys of students with special education needs through the dynamic terrain of hybrid learning because they are also at the forefront of the educational system and are not sufficiently represented in hybrid learning studies.

Methodology

Research Design

Semi-structured interviews were used in this descriptive qualitative study as part of a thematic-content analysis strategy, a technique for "identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). For a fuller knowledge of the topic in question, this procedure emphasizes the experience (Holloway & Todres, 2003; McLeod, 2011), providing a thorough grasp of participants' hybrid learning.

Participants in the Study

Four college female and four male participants were chosen for this study using purposive sampling. They were identified as having physical impairments, sensory impairments, learning challenges, and behavioral, emotional, and social issues. They were enrolled in the hybrid learning program offered by the Catholic tertiary institution De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde across all its schools. All participants are also proficient users of learning management

systems, digital learning tools, and conference platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet because all classes were taught online for over two years. However, the participants have yet to take a hybrid learning course.

Table 1
Participants

Participants (Ps)	Gender	Age	Year Level	Diagnosed Condition
P1	M	23	Third Year	Severe Hearing Loss
P2	M	22	Second Year	Physical Impairment (Arthrogryposis)
P3	M	22	Second Year	Asperger Syndrome, Learning Disability
P4	M	21	First Year	Autism Spectrum Syndrome, High Anxiety & Depression
P5	F	22	Second Year	Attention Deficit Disorder, Anxiety, and Depression
P6	F	22	Second Year	Epilepsy, Anxiety, Depression & Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
P7	F	22	Second Year	Hearing Impairment with Cochlear Implant

Note: Participants' Demographics and Diagnosis

Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview was used to obtain the data. The research instrument is a 10-item questionnaire developed by the researcher with the guidance of special education professors about their perspectives, expectations, significant experiences, challenges or barriers, and vision for hybrid learning, administered through in-depth interviews.

Before distributing the questionnaires to the study participants, the researcher pilot-tested them with individuals who shared the same interests as those who would be participating in the study (Turner, 2010). This allowed the researcher to identify any weaknesses and limitations in the questions and make the required adjustments. To obtain adequate formulations, a small sample of interviewees completed the questionnaire (Bayat et al., 2019).

Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedure started after obtaining permission from the Center for Inclusive Education of De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, especially from the Learning Support Case manager. This unit provides support and appropriate accommodation for students with special

learning needs. The Case Manager provided a possible list of the participants, and the researcher sent them an email with the consent form, inviting them to participate in the study. Upon receiving their signed consent form, the researcher emailed the participants several options for the in-depth interview dates through Zoom video conferencing. The interview for every participant lasted from 30 min to 1 h. Participants with hearing impairments requested a copy of the interview questions beforehand to understand the questions well and provide concrete answers. Their mothers also joined during the interview to assist their children. During the interview, the Zoom live transcript was also enabled to help the participants with hearing impairments understand the questions clearly. The researcher also provided adequate time for other participants to think before sharing their responses. When the participants had difficulty understanding some terms, the researcher used simpler words to help them respond to the questions. The interviews were recorded with the participant's consent, and the responses were transcribed. The transcription was verified by checking them against the data and seeking the participants' feedback to ensure the findings were accurate and represented their experiences.

Data Analysis

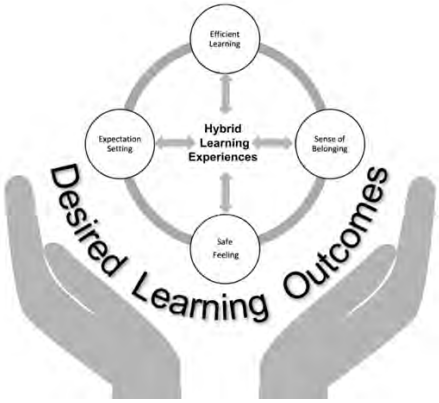
The data collected through in-depth interviews were transcribed, reviewed for accuracy and completeness, and coded and categorized. The researcher manually did this process to identify the themes and patterns of the data. The result of the thematic analysis was interpreted in light of the research questions to extract meaningful insights that allowed a more profound understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives. Aside from the interview data, the researcher used the existing literature on hybrid learning environments to triangulate the data to increase the credibility of the findings and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Findings and Discussion

The themes that emerged from the data include *efficient learning, safe feeling, a sense of belonging, and expectation setting*. The researcher used P1, P2, or P3 to specify the participants to maintain the participants' privacy. The schematic diagram for this study's findings is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Schematic Diagram of Hybrid Learning Experiences of College Students with Special Education Needs



Note: Themes for College students with special education needs' hybrid learning experiences

Perception and Experiences of Hybrid Learning Environments

The participants perceive and experience hybrid learning as a modality with benefits and challenges. Efficient learning and safe feeling were the themes that surfaced for the benefits, sense of belonging, and expectation setting for the challenges. These themes encapsulated how the desired learning outcomes in hybrid learning environments will be achieved.

Efficient Learning

This theme highlights flexibility and independence, essential tools for the participants' practical learning. They experience flexibility in learning through different learning materials like audio, video, and text. For the participants, hybrid learning is fun, easy, and convenient. For instance, one participant (P2) with arthrogryposis, a descriptive term that describes an individual with congenital contractures of three or greater joints (Levine & Van Heest, 2021), said, "I can type whenever I want. I can submit my requirements on time and pass my assignment using Google Slides or video, which I love to do. It is hassle-free!" P1, who has profound hearing loss, was convinced that hybrid learning is exciting. He said, "I love it when I am with my classmates in the lab."

Moreover, P3, who has Asperger syndrome, conveyed, "The learning materials are accessible so long as I have an internet connection. I can use shortcuts to learn easily, so most of the time, learning is enjoyable." Therefore, utilizing technology in hybrid learning platforms, mobile apps, and other digital resources can make learning more advantageous for students with special learning needs.

Likewise, P4, who has Autism Spectrum Syndrome, expressed his affirmation of hybrid learning, especially in the online class. He said, "Since it is online, it is easier to finish tasks; I

do not need to submit hard copies, but digital essays work easily." Another participant (P7) with hearing impairment said, "I can study efficiently in front of my computer, in an air-conditioned room without traveling, even without my mother assisting me."

Aside from flexibility, participants also experience greater independence in hybrid and efficient learning. They take ownership of their learning process and are self-directed in their studies. As a result, they feel assured and in control of their learning. Like P6, who has epilepsy and experiences anxiety and depression, said,

> "I like it when teachers have prepared video recordings, and I can always visit the recording if I do not understand the discussion with the teacher. The recordings help me a lot because the teacher records the lesson alone, with no disturbances, so she is focused on her lecture, which also helps me focus on her discussion. With this, I learn better".

Allowing the students to make decisions and have choices in their learning can foster their autonomy and self-motivation. Hence, they take responsibility for their learning in the hybrid learning environment. In addition, the hybrid learning approach could offer an array of opportunities for the student's time and space constraints (Tyagi et al., 2021) and is effective with students with special education needs.

Safe Feeling

This theme emphasizes accommodations and accessibility, crucial for the participants' well-being and learning success, and are manifested when they feel comfortable and included in the learning environment. For example, one participant (P7) with hearing impairment was grateful for how her needs were accommodated. She said,

> "I am thankful for my case manager, who informs my professors about my condition. He always asks me about my needs or if I have difficulty in my courses. Because of his assistance, my teachers are informed about my condition, so whether online or face-to-face, I am not afraid in class."

Moreover, P7 was also pleased with how her school is true to its inclusion policy. "I am so much satisfied with the school accommodation policy. Before I enrolled here, I considered other schools, and I think this school is the best, so our money is not wasted because this school accommodates my needs." She concluded.

All participants feared commuting to school because of their disabilities. Instead, they believe their home is the safest place to engage in class or do schoolwork. For P2 with arthrogryposis, he said, "My wheelchair is still new; I am still practicing using it, and I have difficulty commuting because of my condition, so I am comfortable in my room to attend my classes." Another participant (P5) with attention deficit disorder said, "I am scarred socializing with others, so I do not talk." Finally, P6 has epilepsy, and she expressed, "The commute to school

is a significant factor in my learning because of my disability. Although I am taking my medicine, I still worry about my seizures or drop-downs. Also, the traffic is terrible!" Therefore, a home is a safe place for the participants to be productive because of their conditions. In addition, their parents, siblings, or helpers are there to assist them with their needs. Thus, with hybrid learning, online classes work well for them.

Regarding accessibility, the participants claimed they easily navigate the learning materials in hybrid learning through the learning management system, allowing them to manage their disabilities better. "BigSky is easy to maneuver," one participant said, referring to the school's official learning management system. Furthermore, disclosing their disability to their professors gave them a feeling of security that they would be given more time to access and accomplish their tasks and be more understanding of their needs.

Students with special education need to succeed academically and personally. They must feel safe and secure. Creating a welcoming learning environment for them might promote their general well-being. By working together in a secure environment, the hybrid learning approach aids students in learning (Trela & Rutschmann, 2022).

Adaptation and Coping Strategies in Hybrid Learning

Sense of Belonging

This theme focuses on the participant's social interaction, a challenge for the students with special needs to adapt and cope in the hybrid learning environment. For example, for P1 and P7 with profound hearing loss, engaging in class online and in person with professors and classmates wearing masks is very tough. "I have difficulty responding to our conversations with my classmates in the lab because I do not see their lips, "P1 asserted. Similarly, P7 explained,

> "When I am scheduled for face-to-face, it is difficult to understand my classmates and professors because they wear their masks. So, I ask my seatmate to explain what our professor has said. Sometimes, I feel too shy to disturb my classmates. It would be easier to understand the lessons if I see their lips."

Lip reading determines a person's words by watching lip movements without hearing the sound (Sooraj et al., 2020). It also recognizes speech information based on the change in lip movement, called visual speech recognition (Wang et al., 2022). In short, this method determines the speech by looking at the lips' movement. For deaf or people with hearing impairment, lip reading is crucial for understanding challenging conditions. However, when their community is not aware of the importance of lip reading, they feel isolated. This isolation may be caused by several factors, such as limited opportunities for interaction online or in person or difficulty navigating technology or accessing lesson materials. For example, P7 receives a brief comment from her groupmate while discussing their group project. She declared, "Sorry, but I cannot understand what you are saying!" P7 felt this was rude and

insensitive, and she never talked again in the group. P7 was born deaf and was diagnosed when she was 1½ years old. She had her cochlear implants when she was six years old, never learned signed language, but had speech therapy.

Using assistive technology has a great benefit for students who have profound hearing loss. Unfortunately, some teachers are not trained to use the tools to engage their students with special needs. P1, who has a profound hearing loss, thanked her theology professor, who used the Zoom live transcription to show closed captioning during the online session. With this, he never had problems engaging in class discussions and group activities. Thus, he wished that all teachers with hearing impairments use this tool to include all their students in the online class.

Developing relationships is also daunting for students with Autism Spectrum Syndrome (ASD) in the hybrid learning environment. For P4, diagnosed with ASD and has anxiety and depression, he finds online and in-person learning complicated because of difficulty communicating with peers and professors. He claimed, "It is tough to communicate in hybrid learning because others are at home and you are in the classroom. I do not want to work in a group. It creates division in class; there is no connection or bonding." One of the difficulties linked with Autism Spectrum Disorder relates to adaptation to new situations and anxious depressive symptoms because of excessive environmental requirements (Lugo-Marín et al., 2021). As a result, P4 asserted,

> "I do not have friends in class because of the rotation of classes from face-to-face to online. It is hard to make friends with others. Everything is so rigid. So, I do not have significant experience in hybrid learning; it is mostly frustrating! Moreover, we do not open our cameras, so it is difficult to put the face to the name and feel distant.''

Students with special learning needs may feel left out of the classroom and have problems building relationships with peers and professors. Therefore, creating opportunities for social interactions is imperative to mitigate this challenge and promote community, improving the student's educational experience and well-being.

Expectation Setting

This theme underscores communicating the learning outcomes to succeed in the hybrid learning modality. Despite the conditions of the participants, they have set their goals and expectations to ensure adequate academic performance. They believe clear and consistent communication with their teacher and case managers is crucial in working towards an inclusive learning environment. Unfortunately, there were instances when they felt frustrated and undermined because of their disabilities. As one participant (P4) with autism claimed,

> "I contacted my adviser because of immediate concern, but receiving her response took a long time, which triggered my anxiety. She is probably busy, but two days of no reply is too much for me. So I still email her hoping she will respond."

The unpredictable and intolerable behavior of others is one of the things that cause high anxiety levels in people with autism (Costley et al., 2021). It makes it challenging to achieve learning goals in a traditional setting. Therefore, it is ideal for all instructors to thoroughly understand their children's backgrounds to provide prompt, appropriate interventions if needed.

Another participant (P3) also shared his frustration. He commented, "There is no clear direction about using Photoshop in the laboratory. At first, they said it was part of the tuition fee, but there was no warning that it was not in the lab." Likewise, P5 asserted her disappointment with some of her teachers, saying,

> "I hope teachers' timing for their announcements or emails should not be beyond school hours. For example, sometimes teachers would announce that we have online classes at dawn, and we would be surprised that we have a meeting. Also, I hope teachers will use the official learning management system to announce their messages and not through Facebook or other unofficial platforms."

One participant (P7) feels comfortable sharing her disability with her classmates and teachers, saying, "I share my disability with my classmates during breakout session so as not to pity me but to understand me and also to all my professors." However, two participants (P3 & P6) expressed reservations about disclosing their conditions to their classmates and teachers because of their expectations. They pointed out, respectively:

> "I do not want them to know I have special needs. I want the school to maintain the anonymity of students with special learning needs because I do not want my classmates to feel that there might be some biases for giving me extra time for the test or asking for more time for deadlines" (P3).

> "I do not like to tell my situation because of inconvenience to the teacher, and it is not obvious that I have epilepsy. So, I only disclosed my condition to my case manager but not to teachers because of their expectations" (P6).

When students' expectations are unmet, the consequences can harm their educational experience. Unfulfilled expectations can lead to disappointment, frustration, and lack of motivation. When they do not feel that their teachers are meeting their needs, they may become disengaged and uninterested in the material being taught, leading to a decline in academic performance. This can harm the student's overall attitude toward school and learning. Therefore, teachers must take the time to understand and meet the expectations of their students to create a supportive and successful educational experience, especially for students with special education needs.

Achieving Desired Learning Outcomes in Hybrid Learning

In a hybrid learning environment, students with special needs may encounter several difficulties that could impair their learning outcomes. However, students will perform

better in their academic assignments with the assistance of their professors and peers. For an engaged and active learning experience, in-person and online learners need support (Gambo & Shakir, 2022). Participants of this study expressed instances where they received support from their teachers, who were aware of their conditions, which they disclosed at the start of their classes. "My teachers fully accommodated my needs because, from the start of classes, I had already told them about my condition, so they always asked me about my needs," P2 remarked. Like P2, who has a physical disability, P6, who has epilepsy, also shared the same satisfaction: "My professors accommodated my learning well because I disclosed my condition with them before classes started." Another participant liked her professors when they asked her, "Do you have any questions? Is there anything I can help you with?" P4 also shared her appreciation with her teachers, who exerted effort to reach out. "I have conference meetings with my professors to discuss my needs and grades," he said. By disclosing their diagnosed condition with their teachers, they felt secure and assured of additional support and resources to help them succeed.

Accessibility could be a problem in any hybrid learning course. However, participants in this study were okay with using their smartphones to access the course contents. With the effectiveness and efficiency of their learning management system, they effectively controlled their learning tasks. A participant who has severe hearing loss made the following observation:

> "I have no problem with the learning materials, for they are accessible. Also, the LMS is okay, and the video conferencing tool is. I like the video recordings of my teachers because I can always review the lesson if I do not understand the class discussion." (P7)

For students with disabilities to achieve the required learning outcomes, it is crucial to consider their learning requirements. The student and teacher should establish a positive rapport through ongoing communication and cooperation to define how the learner might provide proof of competency. Additionally, individualized learning might aid the learner in better understanding the course instructors' expectations. In general, implementing individualized instruction has a beneficial and constructive impact on student's motivation and learning success (Rahimi et al., 2021). As one of the participants (P4) said, "I appreciate my teachers when they ask me about my needs in class, especially when I am in an online class." Similarly, P5 feels valued when her professor, during in-person classes, provides positive feedback on her work: "I like it when my professor appreciates my work and allows me to work independently."

The role of teachers and peers in facilitating the learning process is essential for students' well-being. One participant confirmed, "The most significant experience in my hybrid class is meeting friendly teachers. I also meet lovely classmates during face-to-face classes." The participants also liked their group activities during face-to-face and breakout sessions when they were online. "I enjoy breakout sessions for our activities and projects because I get to talk to my classmates," P7 said. Similarly, P1 and P6 shared their satisfaction with conversing with their peers during group tasks.

Their teachers' and peers' strategies and support helped the students with special education needs achieve their desired learning outcomes. Furthermore, the collaboration and understanding between teachers, peers, and students with special learning needs break down barriers and foster a culture of inclusion. This way, the support provided can be instrumental in achieving the desired learning outcomes in a hybrid learning environment.

Conclusion

This study on hybrid learning experiences of college students with special education needs highlighted the importance of recognizing their unique needs for better environments and learning outcomes. Participants experienced a safe feeling and efficient learning as benefits of hybrid learning, specifically at home, where they have greater flexibility in understanding and accessing course content and resources. In addition, they can submit their tasks and collaborate with their peers through access and familiarity with digital tools, elevating their learning experience from the comfort of their homes. Finally, through hybrid learning, participants can reduce the cost of transportation and have better time management, allowing them to balance their academic and personal responsibilities.

However, college students with special education needs also experienced challenges in fostering a sense of belonging and clear expectation setting in hybrid learning. For example, the lack of in-person and limited opportunities for face-to-face communication can make it challenging for them to build meaningful connections with their peers and teachers, resulting in isolation and frustration. Further, the lack of clear structure in the student information guidelines, shifting expectations, and inconsistent routines can exacerbate their learning difficulties, making it more complicated for them to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Nevertheless, despite the challenges they experienced in their hybrid learning, their teachers' and peers' support helped them achieve their learning outcomes. With the helping hands of teachers and learners, students with special education needs can overcome obstacles and reach their potential, proving that education success is within reach when we come together as a supportive community.

Implications for Educators

Recognizing learners with special education needs in a hybrid learning environment is crucial for fostering inclusivity and achieving the desired learning outcomes. Educators must prioritize a sense of belonging to counter the learner's isolation. Additionally, the intricacies of expectation setting should never be undermined because acknowledging students' voices will empower them to engage and excel, contributing to a more collaborative and nurturing learning environment. Clear and consistent guidelines can ease students' navigation in hybrid learning, enabling them to focus on their studies and achieve their academic goals confidently and efficiently.

Moreover, embracing a culture of acceptance of diversity in learning enriches all students' understanding of the learning experience, resulting in safe and efficient learning. In this way, educators become instrumental in shaping an environment where every learner can thrive academically and personally.

Recommendations for Future Research

To provide a more thorough knowledge of the difficulties and advantages of hybrid learning settings, the researcher recommends a future study that includes a more significant sample of college students with special education needs from various higher education institutions. Moreover, the best practices for helping students with special education needs can be identified and implemented by conducting additional research on successful teaching techniques, inclusive and supportive learning environments, and personalized support. Treating students with special education needs by teachers in higher education institutions is crucial for future research. Therefore, additional research will help provide invaluable information about students' struggles and perspectives and ensure a welcoming and equal learning experience for all students in hybrid learning environments. This will help develop the best training programs and ensure teachers have the skills and knowledge necessary to support students with disabilities effectively.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself, including your special education needs.
2. What do you understand about hybrid learning?
3. Describe your experiences in the hybrid learning environment.
4. What pedagogical design of hybrid learning is the most effective?
5. How accessible are learning materials, the learning management system, and the video conferencing tools used in class?
6. What are the barriers to hybrid learning that you have encountered?
7. What is your most significant experience with the hybrid learning modality?
8. How are your learning needs accommodated?
9. Are there policies in school about accommodation, accessibility, curriculum, or instruction that you want to improve? Identify.
10. What is your vision for hybrid learning?