

# Academic Performance of Ab Political Science Students in Time of Covid-19 Pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic forced a rapid shift to flexible learning, posing significant challenges to academic performance, particularly for AB Political Science students at Bicol University College of Social Sciences and Philosophy (BUCSSP). This study, grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, examined how interconnected systems, ranging from individual environments to broader institutional and societal factors, shaped students' experiences during the 2nd semester of AY 2023-2024. Using a descriptive quantitative research design, data were collected from 72 students via online surveys, utilizing Slovin's Formula for sample size determination. Key findings revealed that while most students had access to technology and stable internet, issues such as noise, household disruptions, power instability, and inadequate submission flexibility hindered learning. Concerns about instructional pacing, delayed feedback, and limited teaching methods were also highlighted, alongside insufficient hardcopy materials and library resources. Recommendations include enhancing access to hardcopy materials, providing backup power solutions, diversifying teaching methods, and improving feedback timeliness. Addressing household disruptions and noise through awareness programs or support mechanisms is also vital. These measures aim to create a more supportive and effective flexible learning environment, ensuring equitable academic opportunities during crises and beyond.

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought myriads of disruptions which prompted many people to rethink and reconsider various aspects of their lives. Its impact is ubiquitous since it has affected almost all sectors including educational institutions (Hashemi, 2021). The imposition of mitigating responses such as but not limited to lockdowns, social distancing and restriction of mass gathering and limitations of several face-to-face activities have forced most educational institutions to migrate to online platforms. Hence, to ensure the continuity of learning among the students, higher educational institutions (HEIs) implemented the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) wherein courses were offered in fully remote and in online formats (Bond et. al, 2021).

Moreover, to ensure that the quality of education will not be compromised due to the sudden shift to online learning formats, several HEIs had to make policies and guidelines that would adjust to the current situation, and to meet the challenges in the new normalcy in education. Bicol University, in particular, have issued several administrative orders (AO No. 121, s. or 2020 dated 3 July 2020, AO No. 168, s. of 2020 dated 24 July 2020, AO 196, s. 2020 dated August 7 2020 and AO No. 326, s. of 2020 dated 10 September 2020) outlining certain policies and guidelines on the implementation of flexible learning modality that would respond and adapt to the challenges of the online learning format, thus, ensuring the continuity of providing inclusive, accessible, and quality of education through various innovative approaches and alternative learning modes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In compliance to the issued university administrative orders, the BUCSSP Political Science Department have adjusted their strategies and approaches to help AB Political Science students achieve the targeted program learning competencies such as, (1) demonstrate critical thinking and cogent argumentation; (2) understand, analyze and apply theories to concrete situations; (3) evaluate judiciously the essence of philosophical learning of the True, the Good, and the Just; (4) communicate philosophical understanding and insight within the

appropriate cultural context; (5) apply analytical and interpretive skills in the study of texts; (6) demonstrate research skills specific to the sub-disciplines in the humanities; (7) effectively communicate orally and in writing using both English and Filipino; and (8) identify multi-perspective and interrelations among texts and contexts. Consequently, the faculty members provided the most flexible means to deliver the course contents and formulate tailor-fit assessments to their students that would help them achieve the targeted learning competencies during the implementation of flexible learning modality in the time of pandemic.

Nevertheless, while innovations and adjustments were made to manage the delivery of instruction and learning process of the students, there are still concerns particularly on factors that may affect the student's academic performance due to the sudden shift to the new mode of learning. Academic performance is one of the many components of student's academic success wherein it shows how well a student does in several academic courses and areas (Masud et. al., 2019; Hashemi, 2021). Since there is a shift from the traditional face-to-face learning to a fully remote and in online formats and learning environment, then there is a need to look into how these changes affects the student's academic performance.

Hence, this study will identify the factors on the academic performance of AB Political Science students during the implementation of the flexible learning modality in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of study will help the students and faculty members in understanding the factors that may affect students' academic performance during a pandemic situation. For the administration and educators, the findings can be utilized in formulating strategies, interventions and enhancement plans to help students improve their academic performance during conduct of flexible learning modality in the time of pandemic. Lastly, this is in compliance with the suggestion of the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACUP) that there should be a study conducted on a periodical basis on the academic performance of AB Political Science students.

### **Research Objectives**

The study aims to identify the factors on the academic performance of AB Political Science students of the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy during the implementation of the flexible learning mode in the time of pandemic.

Specific Objectives:

To determine the academic performance of respondents; and

To identify the factors that affect that the academic performance of the respondents.”

### **REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES AND LITERATURES**

In the study conducted by Hashemi (2021), it revealed that there is a close relationship between the academic performance of Afghan students with their level of satisfaction. The study concluded that students' academic performance is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and that they were also dissatisfied with the online learning setup. It is recommended by the researcher that trainings should be conducted particularly on the use of online teaching applications and technologies, as well as provision of internet packages and virtual resources should be made available. It was also recommended that the teachers should provide comprehensive and interactive online classes, provide constructive feedbacks, and offer helpful guidance to their students so that it would improve their level of satisfaction with online teaching.

Another study conducted by Tang et. al. (2020) investigated the efficacy of various online teaching setups as well as compared the proposed combined model of online and flipped learning to other online and traditional models. The study revealed that students were dissatisfied with online learning mainly with the communication and Q&A style. It also revealed that combined model of online and flipped learning has a positive effect on the students' learning, attention, and evaluation of courses. Moreover, it also showed that the traditional teaching is more advantageous than online specially in courses involving difficult theories and abstract formulas.

Also, study of Keržič et. al. (2021) identified the factors that influenced how students viewed their academic performance during the shift to emergency e-learning in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. The study was conducted using an online survey on a sample of 10,092 higher education students from 10 countries across four continents during the pandemic's first wave. The study revealed that quality of service, the teacher's active role in the process of online education, and the overall system quality were the most important factors that determines the quality of e-learning, while students' digital competencies and online interactions with their colleagues and teachers were slightly less important factors (Keržič et al. 2021). Moreover, the study revealed that the students' satisfaction with e-learning mediated the impact of e-learning quality on their performance. Consequently, it was suggested that there should be a clear educational, research, and policy agenda. It is also recommended and encouraged that there should be an investment in the development of digital capabilities among students and faculty, as well as initiatives that would promote research and multidisciplinary innovative cooperation in the context of many areas of higher online education (Keržič et al. 2021).

Furthermore, in the study conducted by Reyes and Gonzales (2021) revealed that students in general are not ready for online learning, and that the contributing factors on why students, particularly information technology students, are struggling during online classes is the availability of device for online learning activities and weak to average internet connection. Although the findings shows that information technology students were familiar with a variety of online learning platforms and confident in using learning devices, it also shows that students still lack mastery (Reyes and Gonzales, 2021). Furthermore, the students' learning environment at home is not conducive and student's discerned that the traditional face-to-face learning setup is more effective than the online learning setup.

Meanwhile, in the study of Almaiah et al. (2020) showed that their respondents stated that there are five critical factors that affect the use of e-learning systems, namely: (1) technological factors, (2) e-learning system quality factors, (3) cultural aspects, (4) self-efficacy factors and (5) trust factors. So, universities should take into consideration these five factors in their future plans. Furthermore, the findings revealed that there are three major obstacles that hinders the use of e-learning system, these are (1) change management concerns, (2) e-learning system technical issues, and (3) financial support issues.

Likewise, in the study of Gopal et. al. (2021) identified the factors affecting the satisfaction and performance of those who are taking management courses during online learning. The study revealed that four factors namely: (1) quality of instructor, course design, prompt feedback, and student expectations have positive impact to the students' satisfaction and that students' satisfaction have positive impact to their performance.

In the research conducted by Maheshwari (2021) showed that online learning can be hampered by connectivity issues. It is therefore recommended to immediately move to Industry 4.0 in order to improve the learning environment with more reliable, faster, and accessible internet connectivity. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic may provide an opportunity for educational institutions to assess and improve their online learning and training capabilities.

Nevertheless, Barrot et. al. (2021) looked into the challenges that students faced in an online learning setup, as well as how the pandemic impacted their learning experience. According to their findings, the challenges that students face during online learning varied in terms of type and extent (Barrot et. al., 2021). It revealed that the learning environment is the greatest challenge that student faces during the online learning setup, and that the pandemic worsened the challenges that students faced particularly in terms of the quality of learning experience, finances, interaction, mental health, and mobility. Meanwhile, findings showed that students used a variety of strategies to overcome the challenges they encountered learning online. Accordingly, the strategies used by the students may have been influenced by a variety of factors such as their personality, aptitude, resources available for online learning, and relationship with educators and peers. Consequently, the overall findings of their research showed that the extent of challenges as well as of the strategies may vary from one student to another, therefore, should be considered as a result of interaction of several factors (Barrot et. al., 2021).

Similarly, the study of Suryaman et. al. (2020) showed that in an online learning setup there are numerous challenges such as lack of mastery of technology, expensive internet cost, additional workload for parents in

assisting their children online learning, and lack of communication and socialization amongst students, parents, teachers, and school administrators.

Furthermore, Vadakalu Elumalai et al. (2020) focused on studying the relationship of seven variables that influences the quality of e-learning in HEIs amid the COVID-19 pandemic, namely: (1) administrative support, (2) course content, (3) course design, (4) instructor characteristics, (5) learner characteristics, (6) social support, and (7) technical support. Their study revealed that a positive relationship exists between these set of variables and the quality of e-learning. They also analyzed the effects of gender and level of the course on the quality of e-learning. It revealed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a significant difference in the perception of the students between the level of the course, gender, and the quality of e-learning. Consequently, the researchers recommended that HEIs should focus on the study outcomes in relation to the mentioned variables in order to enhance the quality of e-learning in times of pandemic.

Another study conducted by Toquero (2020), concludes that higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines are facing challenges in its system of planning, implementation, and assessment. So, there is a need for HEIs to review the curricular interventions in relation to online learning as well as consider the need for enhancement in the instructional delivery. Consequently, it is recommended that HEIs must take the opportunity to develop evidence-based practices, offer online and accessible medical and mental health-related services, and make their curricula more responsive and adaptive to the evolving demands particularly in the time of pandemic.

Nevertheless, in the research of Gonzalez et. al. (2020), they analyzed the effects of COVID-19 confinement on higher education students' autonomous learning performance. The results of the research revealed that the COVID-19 confinement has a positive effect on the students' academic performance and that student can find by themselves numerous different motivations to work on a regular basis. Therefore, the researchers concluded that COVID-19 confinement changed the learning strategies of the students to a more consistent habit thus improving their learning efficiency. As a result of COVID-19 confinement, greater scores in students' assessments are expected, which can be justified by a significant improvement in their learning performance.

The study of Giusti et al. (2021) looked into the impact of distance education on social cognition, mental health, and memory abilities in a sample of university student during the COVID-19 lockdown in Italy and identified the predictors of students' academic performance. Their study revealed that there is a negative impact of distance education on the students' mental health. Students exhibits depressive symptoms and as well as difficulties with concentration and learning which latter is considered as the strongest predictors of poor academic performances.

Likewise, in the study conducted by Lee et. al. (2021) showed that those students who had greater risk perception regarding COVID-19 were more likely to show poor academic performance. The students' risk perception may cause anxiety, discomforts and stress which can be a hindrance to their learning.

In the study conducted by Koob et. al. (2021) revealed that during pandemic, educational institutions should focus on providing beneficial and favorable instructional formats and innovative means to support students who lacks social networks. Accordingly, educational institutions should consider developing ways to assist students on how to organize their everyday lives as well as launching initiatives and campaigns that would boost the students' self-efficacy views.

Hence, the review revealed that are ample of research conducted in relation to the impacts of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the studies focus on the readiness and the overall online learning experiences of students, while some focused-on challenges of online learning to students' mental health. The review also showed that there are few studies that tackles about factors that affects students' performance during online learning and it was limited to the field of health, information technology, and management courses. There were no studies conducted that tackles about the factors on the academic performance of students who are in the field of political science, and there were no studies that used the theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner's "Ecological System Model" as a theoretical foundation in analyzing their research findings. Thus, this study will bridge the gap by identifying the factors on the academic performance of AB Political Science students during the implementation of the flexible learning modality in the time of pandemic.

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## Conceptual/ Theoretical Framework

In this study, the theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner's "Ecological System Model", or often referred to as the "bioecological model", will be used as the theoretical foundation for discussing and analyzing the research findings across the different methodologies. Bronfenbrenner asserted that there are multiple factors that affects the development of a child. He described human development as "the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the life span, between a growing human organism and the changing immediate environments in which it lives" (Bronfenbrenner 1977, p. 514). Bronfenbrenner conceptualized his theory of human development based on a nested arrangement of structures which are interrelated and influences the development of a child and learner. These structures are the microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

The microsystem is the first level in Bronfenbrenner's theory. It is defined as the "the complex of relationship between the developing person and the environment in the immediate setting containing the person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 514). In a microsystem relationship are bidirectional, which means that the learner can be impacted by others in their environment while simultaneously having the ability to change the beliefs and actions of others (Guy-Evans, 2020). Simply put, microsystems impact the learners directly and the it plays a vital role in their learning development. Part of the learner's microsystem includes family, teacher, school, home, peer groups, and religious groups and among others (Popa et. al., 2020). The mesosystem, on the other hand, is that which "comprises the interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). It is where a learners' individual microsystems do not function independently, but are interrelated and exert influence on one another, particularly when parents communicate with the teachers, this interaction may influence the learner's development and learning progress (Guy-Evans, 2020). Simply put, a mesosystem is a system of microsystems or interactions between the microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Popa et. al., 2020). According to the ecological systems theory, if the learner's parents and teachers establishes a good relationship, this would have a beneficial impact on the learner's development, however, if the teachers and parents does not have a good relationship, this would have a undesirable impact on the learner's development (Guy-Evans, 2020).

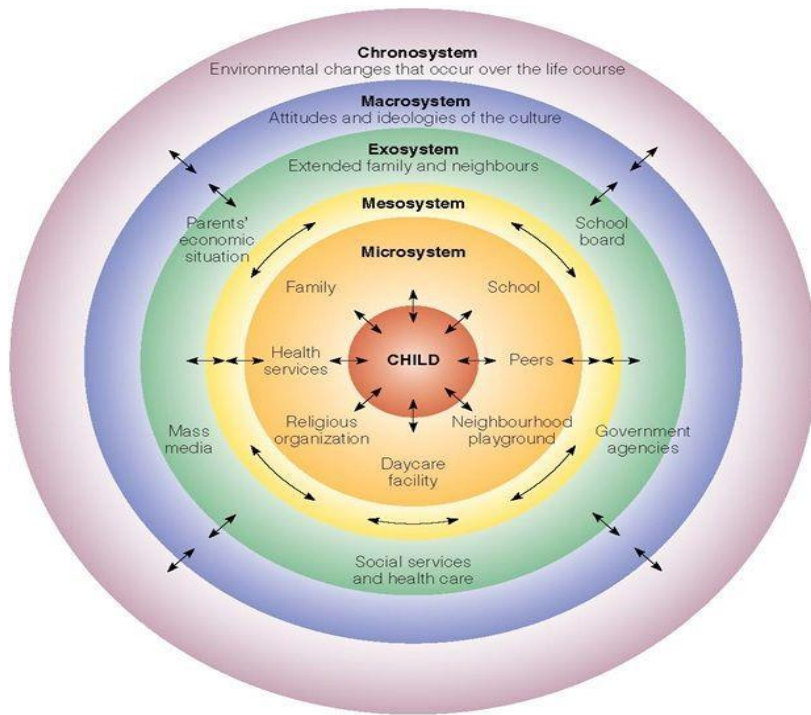
Another component of the ecological systems theory is the ecosystem. It surrounds the microsystem and considered as an extension of the mesosystem which includes both formal and informal social structures that do not contain the developing individual, but may influence or affect them indirectly (Popa et. al., 2020; Bronfenbrenner, 1977). In other words, even though the learner has no direct interaction with the ecosystem, it has an impact on their experiences since the ecosystem affect the systems in which the individual interacts directly (Popa et. al., 2020). Ecosystem encompasses the parent's work environment, neighbors, larger institutions such as government agencies, school board, communication and transportation facilities, and the mass media just to name a few.

Moreover, another component of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is the macrosystem. It focuses on how socioeconomic condition, wealth, poverty, and culture impact the learner's development (Guy-Evans, 2020). Fundamentally, it differs from the preceding ecosystems since it does not refer to the specific contexts or environments that affects the life of the learner but to the already established society and existing culture or subculture which the learner is developing in (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Guy-Evans, 2020). Nevertheless, it influences all other systems and can be considered as the society's "blueprints" that provides structure to the lives of the learners (Popa et. al., 2020). Thus, the macrosystem contains the social and cultural components that have an impact on the learner and others around them. Lastly, the final level of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is the chronosystem. This system includes all the environmental changes that happens during the life of the learner and impact their development, such as important life transitions and historical events (Guy-Evans, 2020).

Thus, this theory is appropriate for the present study since there are a multitude of structures that may determine and influence the learning development of BA Political Science students. Also, this theory would help in further understanding the multitude of factors that may have an impact on the academic performance of the BA Political

Science students and their achievement of the learning competencies of the different programs during the implementation of the flexible learning modality in the time of pandemic.

Figure 1: Conceptual model of Urie Bronfenbrenner’s “Ecological System Model



## Materials and Methods

The study was descriptive quantitative research in which the researchers aimed to describe the situation of BUCSSP AB Political Science students by employing a theory-based design method that involved gathering, analyzing, and presenting collected data. The study employed quantitative research tools, particularly the use of a survey tool, to collect data from fourth-year students.

## Participants

The study was conducted with selected AB Political Science students from Bicol University College of Social Sciences and Philosophy. The survey respondents consisted of AB Political Science students who were enrolled in the fourth-year level during the 2nd semester of the Academic Year 2023-2024.

The respondents for the survey were chosen using Slovin’s Formula with a margin of error of 5% to ensure reliability and validity. A survey questionnaire was applied to measure the values of the variables of the study regarding the factors that affected the academic performance of the students. A survey questionnaire was designed by the researcher to address the objectives of the study.

## Data Collection

The data for the study were collected using an online survey administered through a digital platform, ensuring convenience and accessibility for all participants, particularly in light of the pandemic. The survey was designed to capture quantitative data through closed-ended questions, which measured the frequency, intensity, and nature of various challenges and experiences faced by AB Political Science students during online learning. These questions addressed factors such as access to technology, the availability of learning materials, support from instructors, and external distractions at home. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, such as frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores, to quantify trends and patterns. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the academic performance of students in an online learning environment, using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory as a guiding framework.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 72 students responded in the survey, representing 75.79% of the total population. Respondents were asked to identify various factors that they believed contributed to their academic performance during the pandemic. This exercise aimed to gather insights into the challenges and influences they faced during this unprecedented time. By allowing participants to select multiple factors, we aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of the diverse elements that affected their learning experiences, including personal, environmental, and institutional influences. This approach not only facilitated a richer analysis of their academic journeys but also highlighted the complex interplay of circumstances that shaped their performance. The results for Category A: Attending Online Classes are summarized in Table 1. This table presents a clear overview of the data collected, highlighting key trends and insights related to respondents' experiences with online learning during the pandemic.

Table 1. Attending Online Classes

Category A	f	%
A1. I have a stable and reliable internet connectivity to attend synchronous classes	39	54.17
A2. I have stable and reliable internet connectivity to attend asynchronous classe.	40	66.56
A3. I have appropriate device(s) in attending synchronous classes	44	61.11
A4. I have appropriate device(s) in attending asynchronous classes	40	55.56
A5. I have a device that would serve as a back-up power if there will be power interruptions in my area during online classes	16	22.22

In Category A, a significant 61.11% of respondents (44 students) reported that they have access to appropriate devices for attending synchronous classes, indicating that a majority of students are equipped with the necessary technology to participate in real-time online sessions. This suggests that, for many students, the basic technological infrastructure for engaging in live virtual classes is readily available.

Additionally, 55.56% of respondents (40 students) affirmed that they not only have stable and reliable internet connectivity for attending asynchronous classes but also possess appropriate devices for these sessions. This demonstrates that more than half of the students are equipped with the required tools and internet access to engage in self-paced, pre-recorded online learning, which typically offers greater flexibility in terms of timing and location.

These three factors—appropriate devices for synchronous classes, reliable internet for asynchronous learning, and appropriate devices for asynchronous classes—represented the highest percentages among all variables assessed in this category, highlighting that the majority of students have the essential resources for participating in online learning, both in real-time and at their own pace.

In contrast, only 22.22% of respondents (16 students) reported having a device that could serve as a back-up power source in the event of power interruptions during online classes. This finding points to a significant gap in preparedness for potential disruptions, as having a power backup can be crucial for maintaining continuous participation in online education. This was the lowest response rate among all factors considered in Category A, suggesting that many students may be vulnerable to interruptions that could hinder their ability to attend or complete online classes effectively.

Next, the results for Category B: Submission of Class Requirements are presented in Table 2. This table provides a detailed overview of the data collected, highlighting the participants' experiences and challenges related to submitting their academic assignments during the pandemic.

Table 2. Submission of Class Requirements

Category B	f	%
<b>B1.</b> The time allotted for submissions of class requirements are enough	41	56.94
<b>B2.</b> The submission format of class requirements was clearly stated	38	52.78
<b>B3.</b> I have a stable and reliable internet connectivity to submit class requirement online.	35	48.61
<b>B4.</b> There are opportunities for late submission of class requirements	35	48.61
<b>B5.</b> There are opportunities for late submission of class requirements	26	36.11

In Category B, a significant 56.94% of respondents (41 students) reported that the time allotted for the submission of class requirements is sufficient. This suggests that a majority of students feel that the deadlines set for submitting their assignments and tasks are realistic and manageable, providing them with adequate time to complete their work.

In addition, 52.78% of respondents (38 students) affirmed that the submission format for class requirements was clearly stated. This finding indicates that more than half of the students were confident that they understood how to properly format and submit their assignments, reducing potential confusion or mistakes in the submission process.

Furthermore, 48.61% of participants (35 students) indicated that they have stable and reliable internet connectivity to submit class requirements online and that there are opportunities for late submissions of class requirements. This suggests that nearly half of the respondents are not only able to access the online platforms necessary for submitting their work but also have some flexibility in case they need to submit assignments after the initial deadline. These four factors—adequate time for submission, clear submission format instructions, reliable internet connectivity, and opportunities for late submissions—represented the highest percentages among all variables assessed in this category, highlighting areas where students feel relatively well-supported in terms of meeting class requirements.

In contrast, only 36.11% of respondents (26 students) reported that there are opportunities to submit missed class requirements. This finding stands out as the lowest response rate among all factors considered in Category B, suggesting that a significant portion of students may not have sufficient flexibility to make up for missed assignments, potentially impacting their ability to keep up with course requirements. This limitation points to a gap in the availability of opportunities for students who may face unforeseen challenges in meeting submission deadlines.

Next, the results for Category C: Module are outlined in Table 3. This table provides a comprehensive overview of the data collected, offering insights into participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the modular learning approach during the pandemic.

Table 3. Module

Category C	f	%
<b>C1.</b> I can access the modules with ease online	66	91.67

<b>C2.</b> I have stable and reliable internet connectivity to download the modules	54	75.00
<b>C3.</b> The modules are available in hardcopies (if students request for hardcopies)	9	12.50
<b>C4.</b> The content of the module is adequate, clear, informative, and useful	33	45.83
<b>C5.</b> The learning objectives of the module is clearly stated, and the contents and assessment correspond to the learning objectives.	21	29.17
<b>C6.</b> The modules are in accordance with the course/learning contents stated in the syllabi	30	41.67

In Category C, a substantial 91.67% of respondents (66 students) reported that they can easily access the modules online. These finding highlights that the vast majority of students are able to navigate the online platform without difficulty, ensuring they can obtain the materials needed for their studies. This ease of access is crucial in an online learning environment, as it enables students to engage with course content efficiently and without unnecessary delays.

Additionally, 75% of respondents (54 students) indicated they have stable and reliable internet connectivity to download the modules. This suggests that a large proportion of students are equipped with the necessary technological infrastructure to download course materials seamlessly. Stable internet access is essential for ensuring that students can download, view, and engage with the modules in a timely manner, thus supporting their academic progress.

Furthermore, 45.83% of participants (33 students) affirmed that the content of the modules is adequate, clear, informative, and useful. This indicates that nearly half of the respondents found the module content to be well-structured and valuable for their learning. Clear, informative, and relevant content is vital for students to understand and retain key concepts, and the positive feedback regarding content quality suggests that the modules are meeting these educational needs for a significant portion of students.

These three factors, easy access to modules online, reliable internet connectivity for downloading, and the adequacy and clarity of the module content—represented the highest percentages among all variables assessed in this category, reflecting strong student satisfaction in terms of accessing and engaging with the course materials

In contrast, only 12.5% of respondents (9 students) reported that the modules are available in hardcopy format upon request. This finding stands out as the lowest response rate among all factors considered in Category C, indicating that a significant number of students may not have the option to access physical copies of the modules, which could present challenges for those without consistent internet access or those who prefer to work with printed materials. This limitation points to a gap in the accessibility of course materials, potentially impacting students who may struggle with digital formats.

For the final category of contributory factors, the results for Category D: Quizzes and Major Examinations are detailed in Table 4. This table provides insights into how these assessment methods impacted participants' academic experiences during the pandemic. By examining the data, we aim to understand the role that quizzes and major exams played in students' learning processes and overall performance during this challenging period.

Table 4. Quizzes and Major Examinations

<b>Category D</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>D1.</b> I can easily access the quizzes/learning assessments online	43	59.72

<b>D2.</b> I can easily access the major examinations online	35	48.61
<b>D3.</b> I have stable and reliable internet connectivity to answer the quizzes/learning assessments and major examinations	35	48.61
<b>D4.</b> The quizzes/learning assessments covers the learning contents stated in the course syllabi	35	48.61
<b>D5.</b> The major examinations cover the learning contents stated in the course syllabi	32	44.44
<b>D7.</b> The major examinations do not match the learning objectives of the course content	8	11.11
<b>D8.</b> The instructions for examinations and quizzes/learning assessments are well provided and clearly stated	11	15.28
<b>D9.</b> The level of difficulty of major examinations and learning assessments are relatively appropriate given the pandemics situation	31	43.06
<b>D.10</b> The number of quizzes/learning assessments and major examinations are just enough to cover the topics and achieve the target learning competencies.	25	34.72

In Category D, 59.72% of respondents (43 students) reported that they can easily access the quizzes and learning assessments online. This finding indicates that a majority of students are able to seamlessly engage with the online assessments, which is crucial for maintaining the flow of learning in a digital environment. Easy access to quizzes is essential for ensuring students can complete assessments on time and without unnecessary complications.

Similarly, 48.61% of participants (35 students) indicated that they can easily access major examinations online, have stable and reliable internet connectivity to answer both quizzes/learning assessments and major examinations, and that the quizzes and assessments effectively cover the learning content outlined in the course syllabi. This combination of factors suggests that nearly half of the students experience a well-rounded and effective assessment process, where they are not only able to access and complete quizzes and exams but also find that these assessments align with the course material. These four factors—easy access to quizzes and assessments, reliable internet connectivity, and alignment of assessments with the course content—represented the highest percentages among all variables assessed in this category, demonstrating a strong sense of adequacy and support in terms of assessment delivery and content coverage.

Conversely, only 11.11% of respondents (8 students) reported that the quizzes and learning assessments do not match the learning objectives of the course content. This finding marked the lowest response rate in Category D, indicating that a relatively small group of students felt that the assessments were misaligned with the intended learning outcomes of the course. This discrepancy highlights an area for potential improvement, as ensuring that assessments are closely aligned with the learning objectives is critical for accurately measuring student understanding and promoting effective learning.

These findings offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of online assessments during the pandemic, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement in the assessment design and implementation.

The results from 72 student respondents indicate several hindering factors that negatively impacted their academic performance during the pandemic. This survey aimed to explore the specific challenges they encountered in their educational journeys during this challenging period. By allowing participants to select multiple factors, we sought to gain a nuanced understanding of the obstacles they faced, which could include issues such as limited access to technology, disruptions in routine, emotional stress, or lack of support. This comprehensive approach not only illuminates the barriers to effective learning but also underscores the complex

dynamics that influenced their academic outcomes during a time of significant change. The results for Category E: Learning Environment, which focuses on the hindering factors affecting students' academic performance, are summarized in Table 5. This table presents critical insights into how various aspects of the learning environment impacted students during the pandemic, helping to clarify the challenges they faced in their educational journeys.

CATEGORY E	f	%
E1. I don't have a designated study space to attend my synchronous and asynchronous classes.	35	48.61
E2. My family members are not supportive during the conduct of synchronous and asynchronous classes.	9	12.50
E3. House chores disrupt my study habits.	44	61.11
E4. Most of my time are spent on house chores and personal errands than school works.	26	36.11
E5. The noises are not regulated during the conduct of synchronous online classes.	49	68.06
E6. The noises are not regulated during the conduct of asynchronous online classes.	29	40.28
E7. Our place doesn't have a reliable internet connectivity.	21	29.17
E8. Our place doesn't have a reliable power source (power interruptions are frequent).	37	51.39

Table 5. Learning Environment

In Category E, a significant 68.06% of respondents (49 students) reported that noises are not regulated during synchronous online classes. This suggests that a majority of students experience distractions from uncontrolled noise during live online sessions, which can hinder their ability to focus and fully engage with the class. Such disruptions can negatively impact the overall learning experience, potentially affecting both comprehension and participation during synchronous sessions.

Additionally, 61.11% of participants (44 students) indicated that house chores disrupt their study habits. These finding highlights that many students face challenges in maintaining a consistent and focused study routine due to domestic responsibilities. The need to balance academic commitments with household tasks can lead to interruptions in study time, potentially affecting academic performance and overall time management.

Furthermore, 51.39% of respondents (37 students) affirmed that their living environment lacks a reliable power source, with frequent power interruptions disrupting their ability to attend online classes. This is a significant concern for students who rely on consistent electricity to access learning materials, attend classes, and complete assignments. Power interruptions can create barriers to participation, particularly during critical moments such as examinations or live sessions, and may lead to students falling behind in their coursework.

These three findings—unregulated noise during synchronous classes, disruption of study habits due to house chores, and unreliable power sources—represented the highest percentages among all factors assessed in this category, highlighting the significant external challenges students face in their learning environments. These factors suggest that many students are dealing with considerable distractions and disruptions that may impact their academic performance and overall well-being.

In contrast, only 12.50% of respondents (9 students) reported that their family members are not supportive during synchronous and asynchronous classes. This was the lowest response rate among all factors evaluated in Category E, suggesting that, for the majority of students, family support is not a major barrier to their learning. This finding indicates that most students benefit from a supportive home environment, which can play a crucial

role in facilitating their engagement with online learning, whether during live classes or independent study sessions.

Next, the results for Category F: Learning Materials are presented in Table 6. This table provides an overview of the data related to the availability and effectiveness of learning materials, shedding light on how these resources influenced students' academic experiences during the pandemic.

Table 6. Learning Materials

CATEGORY F	f	%
F1. The learning materials are inadequate and mostly not available or can be accessed online.	27	37.50
F2. There are no available hardcopies of learning materials available (if students request for hardcopies).	33	45.83
F3. The learning materials are not informative and irrelevant to learning content.	5	6.94
F4. The learning materials are without learning guides or study questions.	8	11.11
F5. The University Library does not offer support in terms of access to learning materials.	12	16.67
F6. The University Library does not allow in-person visits to its facilities.	7	9.72

In Category F, 45.83% of respondents (33 students) reported that hardcopies of learning materials are not available, even upon request. This finding highlights a significant gap in accessibility, as a considerable portion of students may not have access to physical copies of essential learning materials, which can be especially challenging for those with limited or unreliable internet access. The absence of hardcopies may hinder students' ability to fully engage with the course content, particularly for those who prefer or require printed materials for easier reference or study.

Additionally, 37.50% of participants (27 students) indicated that the learning materials are inadequate, often unavailable, or can only be accessed online. This suggests that a substantial number of students face difficulties in obtaining the materials necessary for their studies. The limited availability or accessibility of learning materials, especially in online formats, can lead to significant barriers in students' ability to effectively engage with the course content and meet academic requirements.

Furthermore, 16.67% of respondents (12 students) noted that the University Library does not offer support in terms of access to learning materials. This finding points to a lack of institutional resources or services that could help students access the materials they need for their coursework. The absence of adequate support from the library can be particularly problematic for students who may not have alternative means of obtaining the required learning materials, potentially hindering their academic success.

These three findings—lack of available hardcopies, inadequacy of online learning materials, and limited support from the University Library—represented the highest percentages among all factors evaluated in this category. Together, they reveal significant challenges students face in accessing the materials they need for effective learning. These barriers could affect students' ability to perform well in their courses and may require attention to improve the availability and accessibility of educational resources.

In contrast, only 6.94% of respondents (5 students) reported that the learning materials are not informative and irrelevant to the learning content. This was the lowest response rate among all factors assessed in Category F, indicating that for the majority of students, the learning materials provided are relevant and contribute meaningfully to their educational experience. This suggests that while access to materials may be a challenge, the quality of the materials themselves is generally not a major concern for most students.

For the final category of hindering factors, the results for Category G: Teacher Factor are detailed in Table 7. This table outlines various aspects related to the role of teachers in the students' learning experiences during the pandemic. By examining these factors, we aim to understand how teacher support, communication, and instructional methods may have influenced students' academic performance in this challenging period.

Table 7. Teacher Factor

<b>CATEGORY G</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
G1. The teachers do not manage and divide the synchronous and asynchronous classes in an appropriate percentage.	3	4.17
G2. The teachers discuss too many topics in a short period of time during synchronous classes.	42	58.33
G3. The teachers are late during the conduct synchronous classes.	12	16.67
G4. The teachers do not maximize the time during the conduct synchronous classes.	3	4.17
G5. The teachers do not follow the schedule as stated in the course syllabus.	3	4.17
G6. Teachers do not encourage student participation during synchronous classes.	3	4.17
G7. The teachers use only one method in delivering the course contents.	27	37.50
G8. Teachers are not or seldom available for questions, clarifications, and concerns during asynchronous classes.	12	16.67
G9. No or late teacher feedback on student outputs and performance.	30	41.67
G10. Teachers does not offer guidance and support to non-academic concerns of students.	9	12.50
G11. Teachers were not approachable, supportive, and considerate.	6	8.33
G12. Teachers does not show mastery of the subject and does not deliver the learning content well.	3	4.17
G13. There is no teacher and student consultation for the adjustments of learning contents, schedule of submission and other class matters.	6	8.33
G14. Teachers are not or seldom available for online consultation even beyond the class schedule.	21	29.17

In Category G, 58.33% of respondents (42 students) reported that teachers discuss too many topics in a short period of time during synchronous classes. This finding suggests that a significant portion of students feels overwhelmed by the pace of instruction, potentially leading to difficulties in fully understanding and absorbing the material. The rapid coverage of numerous topics within limited timeframes may hinder students' ability to engage with and retain key concepts, which can negatively impact their learning outcomes.

Additionally, 41.67% of participants (30 students) indicated that there is either no feedback or delayed feedback from teachers on student outputs and performance. Timely and constructive feedback is crucial for student growth and improvement, as it helps students understand their strengths and areas for development. The lack of prompt feedback may prevent students from addressing mistakes in a timely manner, potentially affecting their academic progress and motivation.

Furthermore, 37.5% of respondents (27 students) noted that teachers use only one method in delivering course content. This suggests that a significant number of students may feel that the teaching approach lacks variety, which can lead to disengagement or difficulties in grasping different types of content. Relying on a single method of instruction may not accommodate the diverse learning preferences and needs of students, making it challenging for all learners to fully engage with the material.

These three findings—overloading students with topics in a short timeframe, lack of timely feedback, and reliance on a single teaching method—represented the highest percentages among all variables assessed in this category. Together, they highlight areas where teaching practices may need to be adjusted to better support student engagement and comprehension.

In contrast, only 4.17% of respondents (3 students) reported that teachers do not manage and divide the time for synchronous and asynchronous classes appropriately, do not maximize time during synchronous classes, do not adhere to the schedule as stated in the course syllabus, do not encourage student participation during synchronous sessions, and do not demonstrate mastery of the subject or deliver the content effectively. These five factors marked the lowest response rates in Category G, suggesting that, for the majority of students, teachers are effectively managing class time, sticking to the syllabus, fostering participation, and demonstrating subject expertise. This low response rate indicates that while there may be some concerns regarding teaching methods and pacing, most students do not feel that these particular aspects of teaching are significant issues.

In summary, the results of this study highlight a range of contributory and hindering factors that significantly impacted AB Political Science students' academic performance during the pandemic. In terms of technology and access, the majority of students reported having the necessary devices, stable internet connectivity, and access to learning materials, which supports effective participation in both synchronous and asynchronous classes. However, significant barriers were also identified, including issues such as unregulated noise during classes, disruptions from household responsibilities, and unreliable power sources. Additionally, the accessibility and adequacy of learning materials, particularly hardcopies and support from the University Library, were areas of concern for many students. In terms of instructional practices, students expressed frustration with the rapid pace of content delivery, lack of timely feedback, and limited use of varied teaching methods, all of which could impede their ability to fully engage with the course material. Despite these challenges, the research indicates that students generally perceive teachers as managing class time effectively and adhering to course schedules. These findings underscore the need for improvements in the areas of access to learning resources, instructional methods, and institutional support to enhance the overall learning experience for students in an online environment.

## DISCUSSION

This study's findings can be analyzed through the lens of Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that an individual's development is influenced by various interconnected systems. The theory highlights the interactions between the microsystem (immediate environments), mesosystem (connections between these environments), exosystem (indirect influences such as community and institutional systems), and macrosystem (broader societal and cultural factors). This framework is particularly relevant in understanding the multifaceted challenges faced by AB Political Science students during the pandemic, as it recognizes the interplay between individual, social, and institutional factors that affect academic performance.

### Category A: Access to Technology and Online Learning Resources

In Category A, the study revealed that a majority of students (61.11%) had access to appropriate devices, and 55.56% had reliable internet connections to engage with synchronous and asynchronous classes. These findings reflect the significance of the microsystem, as students' immediate environment—namely, their home and technology infrastructure—directly affects their academic participation. This aligns with the study by Reyes and Gonzales (2021), which highlighted that students' access to devices and internet connectivity plays a pivotal role in online learning, with students in their study reporting similar struggles regarding weak internet connections

despite being familiar with learning platforms. The issues with power backup (22.22% of students) further demonstrate how external factors—such as local infrastructure—can hinder access to online learning.

Hashemi (2021) also underscores this by noting that a lack of sufficient access to internet resources and technologies can lead to student dissatisfaction and impede academic performance during the pandemic. The study suggested that improvements in internet packages and better access to online resources were necessary to mitigate these challenges. Therefore, the study's findings emphasize that although students have the necessary tools for online education, broader systemic issues, like infrastructure limitations, must be addressed to enhance equitable access to learning resources.

### **Category B: Time Management, Feedback, and Course Requirements**

Category B reflects students' perceptions of course design, submission timelines, and opportunities for late submissions. The findings reveal that 56.94% of students felt that the time allotted for assignments was sufficient, while 52.78% found the submission formats clear. These positive aspects are indicative of effective design within the microsystem, where students interact with course structures and instructional materials. However, the study also revealed that only 36.11% of students had opportunities to submit missed work, pointing to a potential misalignment between institutional policies and the students' individual circumstances. The inflexibility of late submission policies, as seen in this finding, suggests a need for greater accommodation of students' diverse challenges during the pandemic, which resonates with the study by Keržič et al. (2021). Their research emphasized the importance of teachers' active roles and the need for more flexible, supportive systems to improve the e-learning experience and students' academic performance.

Furthermore, the absence of regular feedback (41.67% of students reported delays in feedback) points to a gap in the teacher-student relationship, which is a critical component of the microsystem. Prompt feedback is essential for guiding student learning and fostering development. As highlighted by Gopal et al. (2021), feedback, along with course design and instructor quality, is critical to student satisfaction and performance. Therefore, improving communication and feedback mechanisms between teachers and students, particularly in an online environment, could foster better academic outcomes and higher levels of satisfaction with the learning process.

### **Category C: Access to Modules and Learning Materials**

The findings in Category C indicate that 91.67% of students had easy access to online modules, and 75% were able to download them easily, suggesting that institutional systems in the mesosystem are functioning well in terms of providing access to course content. However, the adequacy of the materials was another concern, with 45.83% of students reporting that the content was insufficient. This points to a disconnect between access and quality, with students receiving materials that may not fully meet their learning needs. This issue is particularly important when considering the findings of Almaiah et al. (2020), which emphasized that e-learning system quality—such as the quality of course content and the effectiveness of the e-learning platform—plays a significant role in determining students' engagement and satisfaction.

The lack of availability of hardcopy materials (reported by 45.83% of students) further reveals institutional shortcomings in providing diverse formats of learning resources, which might benefit students who have limited access to reliable internet or prefer printed materials for studying. Keržič et al. (2021) also identified the importance of the system quality in e-learning and suggested that institutional investment in enhancing the quality of learning materials and digital infrastructure is necessary to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students.

### **Category D: Quizzes, Assessments, and Examinations**

In Category D, a majority of students reported ease of access to quizzes and assessments online (59.72%) and felt that these assessments adequately covered the course content (48.61%). These findings suggest that the institutional framework for assessments was largely effective in facilitating student engagement with course evaluations. However, the 41.67% of students who reported a lack of timely feedback highlight a gap in the

microsystem, where teacher-student interaction is vital for academic progress. As Gopal et al. (2021) found, students' satisfaction with online learning is closely tied to the quality of feedback they receive from instructors, and delayed or absent feedback can significantly hinder their learning process.

Maheshwari (2021) pointed out that such gaps in feedback may be exacerbated by connectivity issues, which in turn affect the learning experience. Therefore, to enhance student performance, it is crucial to ensure that assessments are not only accessible but also accompanied by prompt and constructive feedback.

### **Category E: Environmental Factors and Family Support**

Category E emphasizes the significant role of home and family environments in students' academic experiences during the pandemic. A large portion of students (68.06%) reported that noise during synchronous classes was a significant disruption to their learning, and 61.11% cited household chores as another factor interfering with their study habits. These findings underscore the critical influence of the microsystem, where students' immediate home environments impact their ability to focus and engage with their studies. Barrot et al. (2021) highlighted similar challenges, noting that students' home environments during the pandemic often became a barrier to effective online learning. They suggested that students' learning conditions were further exacerbated by the lack of face-to-face interaction, which in turn affected their mental health and academic performance.

Despite these challenges, only 12.5% of students reported a lack of family support, suggesting that, generally, students received encouragement from their families during online classes. This aligns with Koob et al. (2021), who noted that students' social support networks were crucial for their well-being and academic performance during the pandemic. The family's role in creating a supportive learning environment could help mitigate the negative impact of household distractions.

### **Category F: Learning Materials and Institutional Support**

The findings in Category F reveal significant concerns about the adequacy and availability of learning materials. Nearly half of the students (45.83%) reported that hardcopies of materials were unavailable, and 37.50% found online learning materials inadequate. These concerns highlight gaps in institutional support within the mesosystem, where institutions must provide comprehensive learning resources for students. Almaiah et al. (2020) similarly identified the critical role of system quality and technological factors in the success of e-learning platforms, pointing to the need for universities to address these shortcomings.

Moreover, the fact that 16.67% of students reported inadequate support from the university library indicates further institutional challenges. This aligns with findings from Tang et al. (2020), who suggested that online learning setups are often insufficiently equipped to address students' needs for support services, particularly in resource-intensive fields of study. Institutional support is a key factor in ensuring that students have access to diverse learning materials, which in turn impacts their overall satisfaction and academic performance.

### **Category G: Teaching Practices and Teacher-Student Interactions**

Category G sheds light on the impact of teaching practices and teacher-student interactions on students' learning experiences. A significant number of students (58.33%) reported that teachers were covering too many topics in a short amount of time during synchronous classes. This finding reflects the impact of the teaching microsystem, where the teacher's instructional approach directly affects students' ability to engage with the course material. In line with this, Gopal et al. (2021) found that quality of instruction, including the pacing of content delivery and feedback, plays a critical role in students' satisfaction and learning outcomes.

The 41.67% of students who reported delays in feedback reinforce the need for better communication and interaction between students and instructors. As emphasized by Hashemi (2021), timely and constructive feedback is a key component of effective online teaching, and its absence can lead to dissatisfaction and disengagement. The study by Keržič et al. (2021) further supports this, suggesting that the teacher's active role in online education is essential for ensuring that students are motivated and can successfully navigate their learning environment.

The findings of this study, analyzed through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, demonstrate the complex and interconnected factors that influence AB Political Science students' academic performance during the pandemic. Individual, social, and institutional systems all play a role in shaping students' experiences and outcomes in the online learning environment. The research highlights the importance of improving technological access, enhancing institutional support, fostering positive teacher-student interactions, and addressing home environment challenges to create a more equitable and effective online learning experience. By addressing these issues, higher education institutions can better support students in their academic journey, ensuring that they are equipped to succeed in the evolving landscape of education during the pandemic.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The study aimed to investigate the various factors influencing the academic performance of AB Political Science students following the transition to flexible learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research of multiple categories revealed a complex interplay of human, institutional, and environmental elements that greatly affect students' learning experiences. The results indicated that although students have largely adjusted to online learning modalities, constraints such as limited access to technology, inadequate learning resources, time management issues, and a lack of timely feedback have impeded their overall academic success. The findings show the crucial influence of the home environment, stressing disruptions such as noise and household responsibilities that impede the student's capacity to concentrate during synchronous lessons. Moreover, institutional factors, including the availability of resources such as learning materials and library support, were recognized as significant contributors to student satisfaction and academic achievement. The findings underscore the necessity of overcoming these challenges in order to enhance educational quality and guarantee equitable learning opportunities for every student in the light of the pandemic.

This study presents various recommendations for improving the academic experience of AB Political Science students within flexible learning conditions. First, University should prioritize enhancing technological infrastructure to guarantee fair access to dependable internet and devices, especially for students from underprivileged backgrounds. Furthermore, prioritizing the enhancement of the quality and accessibility of learning materials, both digital and print is essential to guarantee that all students can effectively engage with the course content. Institutions must to implement more adaptable and inclusive assessment practices, providing longer deadlines and explicit recommendations to address students' diverse home circumstances. Moreover, to enhance instructional effectiveness, educators are urged to diversify their pedagogical strategies, deliver prompt and constructive feedback, and optimize course pacing to facilitate student comprehension without overwhelming them. Finally, there must be an enhanced emphasis on student support systems, including mental health services and academic counseling, to mitigate the stress and isolation that several students encounter while online learning. By adopting these guidelines, educational institutions can provide a more supportive and effective learning environment that addresses the various challenges faced by students during the pandemic.

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### Proposed Utilization/ Dissemination Activities Emanating from Results

1. Research paper on the Academic performance of BUCSSP AB Political Science students in the time of pandemic.
2. Recommendations based on the results of the study which could be used in formulating strategies, interventions and enhancement plans in the conduct of flexible learning.
3. Information Dissemination through research forums, webinars, paper presentations, publication.

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