

Instructional Challenges and Opportunities in Alternative Delivery Mode: Experiences of Elementary Teachers and Pupils in Claver District During Class Suspensions

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Abstract

This study examined the instructional opportunities and learning challenges experienced by elementary teachers and pupils in Claver District during class suspensions, with specific attention to modular distance learning as an Alternative Delivery Mode. Anchored in Self-Directed Learning Theory, Transactional Distance Theory, Constructivist Learning Theory, and Resilience Theory, the study used a convergent mixed-methods design involving 81 teachers and 366 Grades 4 to 6 pupils from public elementary schools in Claver District, Schools Division of Surigao del Norte. Quantitative data were gathered through researcher-made questionnaires and analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis test, and Pearson correlation. Qualitative data from open-ended responses were analyzed thematically. Results showed that teachers highly experienced instructional opportunities in modular distance learning, particularly collaboration with parents and community learning support, instructional flexibility, and instructional innovation. Pupils generally accepted the learning opportunities provided by modular distance learning, with the strongest rating given to learning support from parents and community. Significant differences were found in teachers' instructional innovation and creativity when grouped by sex, while pupils' learning opportunities differed according to socio-economic status and parental occupation. A significant positive relationship was found between teachers' flexibility in instructional planning and pupils' flexible learning time and pace. Qualitative findings revealed cognitive learning difficulties, reduced interaction, home-based distractions, delayed module completion, authenticity concerns, and assessment constraints. The study concludes that modular distance learning can sustain instruction during disruptions when supported by teacher flexibility, structured assessment validation, parental involvement, and learner self-regulation.

Keywords: Alternative Delivery Mode, Class Suspension, Elementary Education, Learning Continuity, Modular Distance Learning, Teacher Flexibility

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and recurrent disaster-related class suspensions reshaped basic education by requiring schools to continue instruction beyond conventional classroom delivery. In the Philippines, Alternative Delivery Modes (ADMs) and modular distance learning were used to maintain learning continuity under the Basic Education

Learning Continuity Plan and related DepEd policies. These arrangements became especially relevant in disaster-prone localities where face-to-face classes may be suspended because of public health emergencies, heavy rainfall, typhoons, flooding, or other hazards (Department of Education, 2012, 2020, 2022, 2024). International and Philippine studies similarly show that school closures and learning disruptions require flexible instruction, structured support, and strong home-school coordination to reduce learning loss and sustain engagement (Barrot et al., 2021; Dayagbil et al., 2021).

Modular distance learning offers instructional opportunities by allowing teachers to redesign lessons, adjust pacing, and use self-learning modules that pupils can complete at home. It also provides pupils with flexible learning time and promotes independent study. However, modular delivery also creates recurring instructional and assessment concerns. Teachers may find it difficult to monitor learner progress, verify authenticity of outputs, and provide immediate feedback, while pupils may struggle with comprehension, motivation, limited peer interaction, and uneven home support. These concerns mirror evidence that distance and modular arrangements can heighten transactional distance, weaken assessment routines, and make home learning conditions decisive for learner participation (Jou et al., 2022; Moorhouse & Wong, 2022; Sandvik et al., 2023).

The rationale for the present study rests on the continuing use of modular distance learning during class suspensions in Claver District. While ADMs are policy-supported, local evidence is necessary to determine how teachers and pupils actually experience instructional opportunities and learning challenges in elementary schools. The study addresses this gap by integrating quantitative descriptions of instructional and learning opportunities with qualitative explanations of teacher and pupil challenges. This mixed evidence is intended to inform a context-responsive intervention program for learning continuity during future disruptions.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in four complementary theories. Knowles' Self-Directed Learning Theory explains how learners assume responsibility for planning, completing, and monitoring learning tasks, a central condition in modular instruction. Moore's Transactional Distance Theory explains how physical separation between teacher and learner may produce psychological and pedagogical distance unless reduced through structure, dialogue, and learner support. Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory and Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective explain learning as active meaning construction that is strengthened through scaffolding, interaction, and contextualized support. Garmezy's Resilience Theory frames teachers' and pupils' capacity to adapt during disruption, emphasizing flexibility, persistence, and coping when normal school routines are interrupted (Garmezy, 1993; Knowles, 1975; Moore, 2013; Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978).

Conceptual Framework

The study adopted a convergent mixed-methods framework. Quantitatively, it examined pupil and teacher profiles, teachers' instructional opportunities, pupils' learning opportunities, significant differences across profile groups, and the relationship between teacher and pupil experiences. Qualitatively, it explored teachers' instructional challenges and pupils' learning challenges in modular distance learning. The integration of both strands provided the basis for a proposed intervention program that responds to instructional flexibility, assessment validation, learner support, and continuity planning.

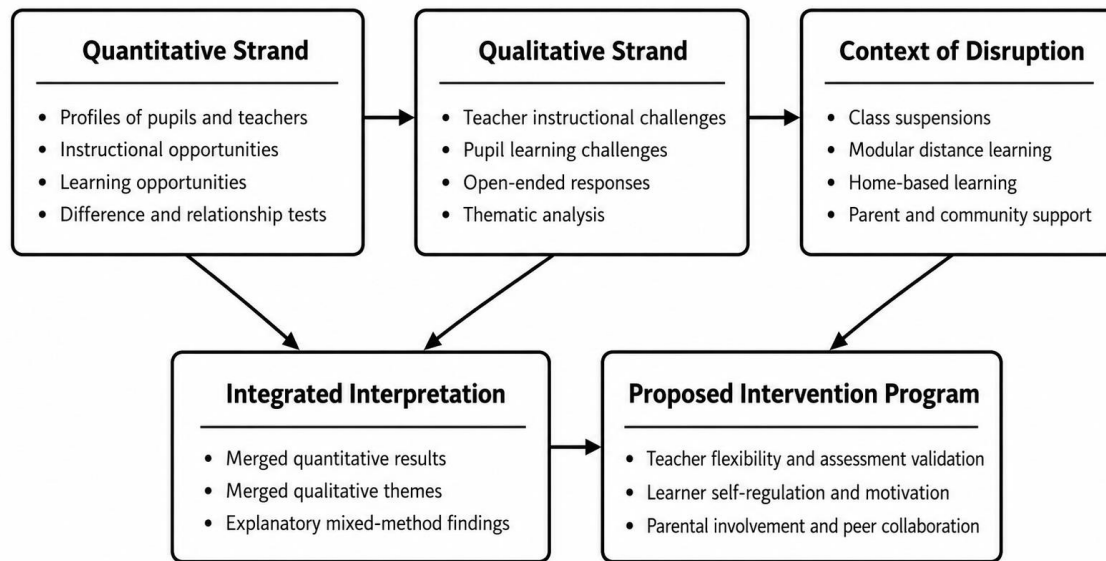


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of instructional challenges and opportunities in modular distance learning during class suspensions

Figure 1 shows that quantitative and qualitative evidence converge to explain modular distance learning experiences during class suspensions. The quantitative strand measures teacher and pupil profile variables and learning opportunity indicators, while the qualitative strand explains challenges in module completion, assessment, authenticity, comprehension, motivation, and peer interaction. The merged findings inform a proposed intervention program for improving ADM implementation.

Aim and Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to examine the instructional opportunities and challenges experienced by teachers and pupils in Claver District during class suspensions in the New Normal, particularly within the context of modular distance learning. Specifically, it sought to:

1. determine the profile of pupils in terms of sex, socio-economic status, occupation of parents, and parents' highest educational attainment;
2. determine the profile of teachers in terms of sex and socio-economic status;
3. determine the extent of teachers' instructional opportunities in ADMs in terms of instructional flexibility, non-face-to-face adaptation, instructional innovation, monitoring and assessment, and collaboration with parents and community;
4. determine pupils' learning opportunities in terms of continuity of learning, flexible learning time and pace, and learning support from parents and community;
5. test significant differences in teachers' instructional opportunities and pupils' learning opportunities when grouped according to profile variables;
6. determine the relationship between teachers' instructional opportunities and pupils' learning opportunities;
7. explore teachers' instructional challenges and pupils' learning challenges in modular distance learning; and

8. propose an intervention program based on the findings.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

- There is no significant difference in the instructional opportunities experienced by teachers when grouped according to their profile variables.
- There is no significant difference in the learning opportunities experienced by pupils when grouped according to their profile variables.
- There is no significant relationship between the instructional opportunities experienced by teachers and the learning opportunities experienced by pupils in modular distance learning during class suspensions.

2. Literature Review

The literature on modular distance learning indicates that instructional continuity depends on the alignment of policy, materials, teacher adaptation, and household support. Philippine studies on learning continuity during the pandemic emphasized that institutions and teachers redesigned teaching-learning processes in response to closure-related constraints (Barrot et al., 2021; Dayagbil et al., 2021). These findings are relevant to Claver District because class suspensions are not limited to pandemic conditions but also occur during weather-related and disaster-related disruptions.

Teacher experience in modular learning is shaped by instructional flexibility, module preparation, monitoring, assessment, and communication with parents. In flexible and remote learning environments, teachers are expected to design materials that learners can understand with limited direct explanation, while also maintaining feedback channels that reduce isolation. Research on remote learning suggests that blending structured materials with regular communication supports learner engagement, but assessment remains problematic when teachers cannot observe the learning process directly (Moorhouse & Wong, 2022; Sandvik et al., 2023). Authentic assessment literature further emphasizes that the validity of outputs depends on task design and learner accountability, which is relevant to teachers' concerns about whether submitted modules reflect pupils' actual work (Colthorpe et al., 2021).

Pupil experience in modular learning is influenced by learner autonomy, home learning conditions, motivation, and parent or community support. Studies on online and distance learning during disruptions identify the home learning environment as a major source of difficulty, particularly where learners have limited access to quiet spaces, learning guidance, or timely feedback (Barrot et al., 2021; Jou et al., 2022). Flexibility can be beneficial because pupils may manage learning time and pace, but it also requires self-regulation and adult support. This duality is central to the present study because modular learning may simultaneously provide opportunity and risk: it sustains continuity but may magnify differences in resources, parental availability, and learner readiness.

The reviewed literature therefore suggests that modular distance learning is not merely a substitute for face-to-face instruction. It is an instructional system that depends on teacher design capacity, learner self-management, parental involvement, and assessment safeguards. The present study contributes localized mixed-method evidence by examining both teacher and pupil perspectives during actual class suspensions in Claver District, linking quantitative patterns with qualitative explanations for intervention planning.

3. Methodology

This study used a convergent mixed-methods design. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same general phase, analyzed separately, and integrated during interpretation. The quantitative strand described

the profile of participants, measured teachers' instructional opportunities and pupils' learning opportunities, tested significant differences across profile variables, and examined relationships among variables. The qualitative strand analyzed open-ended responses on instructional and learning challenges to explain the patterns observed in the quantitative findings.

The participants were 81 teachers and 366 pupils from public elementary schools in Claver District, Schools Division of Surigao del Norte, during School Year 2024–2025. Pupils were from Grades 4 to 6, while the teacher participants were those involved in modular distance learning implementation during class suspensions. The study was confined to public elementary schools in Claver District and did not include private schools, other districts, or grade levels outside Grades 4 to 6.

Researcher-made questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data. The pupil instrument measured learning opportunities in terms of continuity of learning during class suspension, flexible learning time and pace, and learning support from parents and community. The teacher instrument measured instructional opportunities in terms of flexibility in instructional planning and delivery, adaptation to non-face-to-face teaching modalities, instructional innovation and creativity, monitoring and assessment of learners in ADMs, and collaboration with parents and community learning support. Open-ended items were also used to collect qualitative explanations from teachers and pupils.

After securing permission from school authorities, the researcher administered the instruments to the teacher and pupil participants. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis test, and Pearson correlation. Qualitative responses were analyzed thematically through coding, grouping of subthemes, and formulation of major themes. Ethical safeguards included voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, appropriate permission, and the use of data only for academic purposes.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Profile of pupil and teacher participants

Group	Profile variable	Distribution
Pupils	Sex	Male: 124 (33.9%); Female: 242 (66.1%)
Pupils	Socio-economic status	Low income: 97 (26.5%); Middle income: 264 (72.1%); High income: 5 (1.4%)
Pupils	Parents' occupation	Private employee: 124 (33.9%); Laborer/construction worker: 107 (29.2%); Self-employed: 43 (11.7%); Government employee: 39 (10.7%); Unemployed: 28 (7.7%); Farmer/fisherfolk: 25 (6.8%)
Pupils	Parents' highest educational attainment	College graduate: 97 (26.5%); High school graduate: 73 (19.9%); College level: 58 (15.8%); High school level: 52 (14.2%); Elementary graduate: 44 (12.0%); Elementary level: 33 (9.0%); Postgraduate: 9 (2.5%)
Teachers	Sex	Male: 10 (12.3%); Female: 71 (87.7%)
Teachers	Socio-economic status	Low income: 7 (8.6%); Middle income: 74 (91.4%); High income: 0 (0%)

Table 1 shows that the pupil participants were predominantly female and from middle-income families. Parents were mostly private employees or laborers/construction workers, while the largest educational category was college graduate. Among teachers, most were female and belonged to middle-income households. These profile characteristics are important because modular distance learning depends on available home resources, parental support, and teacher capacity to adjust instruction under disruption.

Table 2. Summary of teachers' instructional opportunities in ADMs during class suspensions

Indicators	M	SD	VI	QD
Flexibility in instructional planning and delivery	3.47	0.48	GE	HE
Adaptation to non-face-to-face teaching modalities	3.28	0.60	GE	HE
Instructional innovation and creativity	3.41	0.52	GE	HE
Monitoring and assessment of learners in ADMs	3.39	0.58	GE	HE
Collaboration with parents and community learning support	3.45	0.56	GE	HE
Average	3.40	0.55	GE	HE

Table 2 indicates that teachers highly experienced instructional opportunities in the implementation of ADMs, with an overall mean of 3.40. The highest mean was observed in flexibility in instructional planning and delivery, followed closely by collaboration with parents and community learning support. This means that teachers were able to adjust lesson plans, pacing, and instructional processes to sustain learning. However, adaptation to non-face-to-face modalities obtained the lowest mean among the indicators, suggesting that remote engagement, feedback, and learner monitoring still require strengthening.

Table 3. Summary of pupils' learning opportunities in ADMs during class suspensions

Indicators	M	SD	VI	QD
Continuity of learning during class suspension	3.16	0.44	A	A
Flexible learning time and learning pace	3.17	0.45	A	A
Learning support from parents and community	3.36	0.50	SA	HA
Average	3.23	0.46	A	A

Table 3 shows that pupils generally accepted the learning opportunities provided by modular distance learning, with an average mean of 3.23. Learning support from parents and community received the highest rating, indicating that adult assistance at home and community support were critical in sustaining learning during class suspensions. Continuity of learning and flexible time and pace were also accepted, but their lower means suggest that pupils did not experience modular learning uniformly, especially when they faced comprehension difficulties or home distractions.

Table 4. Significant differences in teachers' instructional opportunities by profile

Profile	Dependent variable	Z	p	Decision	Interpretation
Sex	Flexibility in instructional planning and delivery	-1.561	.119	Accept Ho1	Not significant
Sex	Adaptation to non-face-to-face teaching modalities	-.797	.426	Accept Ho1	Not significant
Sex	Instructional innovation and creativity	-2.162	.031	Reject Ho1	Significant
Sex	Monitoring and assessment of learners in ADMs	-.328	.743	Accept Ho1	Not significant
Sex	Collaboration with parents and community learning support	-1.055	.291	Accept Ho1	Not significant
Socio-economic status	Flexibility in instructional planning and delivery	-.612	.541	Accept Ho1	Not significant
Socio-economic status	Adaptation to non-face-to-face teaching modalities	-.830	.406	Accept Ho1	Not significant
Socio-economic status	Instructional innovation and creativity	-.311	.756	Accept Ho1	Not significant

Socio-economic status	Monitoring and assessment of learners in ADMs	-.157	.875	Accept Ho1	Not significant
Socio-economic status	Collaboration with parents and community learning support	-.313	.754	Accept Ho1	Not significant

Table 4 shows that teacher sex was significantly associated with instructional innovation and creativity ($p=.031$), while all other teacher profile comparisons were not significant. This suggests that perceptions of creative instructional practice may vary by sex, but teachers' general instructional flexibility, non-face-to-face adaptation, learner monitoring, and parent-community collaboration were broadly consistent across profile groups.

Table 5. Significant differences in pupils' learning opportunities by profile

Profile	Dependent variable	χ^2/Z	p	Decision	Interpretation
Sex	Continuity of learning during class suspension	-1.070	.285	Accept Ho2	Not significant
Sex	Flexible learning time and learning pace	-.332	.740	Accept Ho2	Not significant
Sex	Learning support from parents and community	-.295	.768	Accept Ho2	Not significant
Socio-economic status	Continuity of learning during class suspension	6.926	.031	Reject Ho2	Significant
Socio-economic status	Flexible learning time and learning pace	6.102	.047	Reject Ho2	Significant
Socio-economic status	Learning support from parents and community	5.327	.070	Accept Ho2	Not significant
Occupation of parents	Continuity of learning during class suspension	7.459	.280	Accept Ho2	Not significant
Occupation of parents	Flexible learning time and learning pace	7.330	.291	Accept Ho2	Not significant
Occupation of parents	Learning support from parents and community	17.845	.007	Reject Ho2	Significant
Parents' education	Continuity of learning during class suspension	10.090	.121	Accept Ho2	Not significant
Parents' education	Flexible learning time and learning pace	5.652	.463	Accept Ho2	Not significant
Parents' education	Learning support from parents and community	4.958	.549	Accept Ho2	Not significant

Table 5 indicates that pupils' socio-economic status significantly differentiated continuity of learning ($p=.031$) and flexible learning time and pace ($p=.047$). Parental occupation significantly differentiated learning support from parents and community ($p=.007$). Sex and parents' highest educational attainment did not yield significant differences. These results imply that learning opportunities in modular distance learning are shaped more by household economic and occupational conditions than by sex or parental education alone.

Table 6. Relationship between selected teacher instructional opportunities and pupil learning opportunities

Teacher variable	Pupil variable	r	p	Decision	Interpretation
Flexibility in instructional planning and delivery	Continuity of learning during class suspension	0.148	0.188	Accept Ho3	Not significant
Flexibility in instructional planning and delivery	Flexible learning time and learning pace	.306**	0.005	Reject Ho3	Significant
Flexibility in instructional planning and delivery	Learning support from parents and community	0.056	0.619	Accept Ho3	Not significant
Adaptation to non-face-to-face modalities	Continuity of learning during class suspension	0.023	0.840	Accept Ho3	Not significant
Adaptation to non-face-to-face modalities	Flexible learning time and learning pace	0.089	0.427	Accept Ho3	Not significant
Instructional innovation and creativity	Continuity of learning during class suspension	0.039	0.732	Accept Ho3	Not significant
Instructional innovation and creativity	Flexible learning time and learning pace	0.078	0.488	Accept Ho3	Not significant
Monitoring and assessment of learners in ADMs	Learning support from parents and community	-0.151	0.178	Accept Ho3	Not significant
Collaboration with parents/community support	Flexible learning time and learning pace	0.185	0.099	Accept Ho3	Not significant

Table 6 shows that only one relationship was statistically significant: teachers' flexibility in instructional planning and delivery was positively related to pupils' flexible learning time and learning pace ($r=.306$, $p=.005$). The result indicates that when teachers adjust planning, pacing, and delivery, pupils are more likely to experience manageable learning time and self-paced learning. Other relationships were not significant, suggesting that teacher opportunity indicators do not automatically translate into all dimensions of pupil learning opportunity unless supported by household conditions, feedback systems, and learner self-regulation.

Table 7. Integrated qualitative themes on modular distance learning challenges

Theme	Explanation
Learner Cognitive Challenges in Modular Instruction	Pupils experienced difficulty processing lesson content independently, especially when modules lacked immediate explanation or teacher guidance.
Limited Instructional Scaffolding in Self-Learning Modules	Pupils needed clearer explanations, guided examples, and support that approximated classroom scaffolding.
Variability in Learner Readiness and Self-Regulation	Pupils differed in their ability to manage time, sustain focus, and complete tasks without direct supervision.
Home Environment Constraints on Learning Focus	Household responsibilities, distractions, and uneven support disrupted attention and motivation.
Reduced Social Interaction in Modular Learning	Limited contact with peers and teachers reduced collaborative learning, discussion, and motivation.
Institutional and Resource-Based Constraints in Module Distribution	Teachers reported challenges in module reproduction, printing, and distribution of learning materials.
Learner Compliance and Completion Difficulties	Delayed and incomplete submissions affected monitoring, feedback, and assessment schedules.
Challenges in Verifying Authentic Learner Outputs	Teachers found it difficult to determine whether submitted outputs reflected pupils' own understanding.
Adaptive Assessment and Validation Practices	Teachers used oral probing, follow-up questions, rubrics, and multiple evidence sources to validate learning.

Table 7 integrates the qualitative findings from teacher and pupil responses. Pupils' challenges were concentrated on comprehension, motivation, self-regulation, and limited social interaction. Teachers' challenges centered on logistical constraints, delayed submissions, authenticity verification, and assessment validity. These themes explain why quantitative ratings were generally favorable but not uniformly high: modular learning sustained education during suspension, yet it also shifted many instructional and learning responsibilities to homes and to teachers' remote monitoring systems.

Table 8. Proposed intervention program components

Component	Description
Teacher resilience and flexibility	Training on adaptive lesson planning, modular pacing, and continuity strategies.
Authenticity verification and monitoring	Workshops on output validation, oral probing, rubric use, and triangulated assessment.
Student engagement and self-regulation	Activities that strengthen motivation, study routines, time management, and task completion.
Parental involvement	Orientation and simplified monitoring guides for parents and guardians.
Peer collaboration and social learning	Structured peer check-ins, group learning tasks, and safe collaborative activities during suspension.
Instructional opportunity sharing	Teacher learning circles for sharing ADM strategies and locally effective practices.

Table 8 presents the proposed intervention program derived from the integrated findings. It prioritizes teacher flexibility, assessment validity, learner engagement, parental support, and peer interaction. The intervention is designed to enhance existing strengths in ADM implementation while addressing gaps in feedback, authenticity checking, learner motivation, and home-based support.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that modular distance learning in Claver District provided meaningful instructional and learning opportunities during class suspensions, particularly through flexible instructional planning, parent-community support, and continuity of learning. However, its effectiveness was constrained by delayed module completion, difficulty verifying authenticity of pupils' outputs, assessment limitations, learner comprehension problems, weak motivation, home distractions, and reduced peer interaction. Statistical results further showed that teacher instructional innovation varied by sex, while pupil learning opportunities were influenced by socio-economic status and parental occupation. The significant relationship between teacher flexibility and pupils' flexible learning time and pace confirms that teacher adaptability is an important enabling condition for successful modular learning, but it must be supported by structured feedback, parent orientation, assessment validation, and learner self-regulation mechanisms.

It is recommended that schools strengthen their Learning Continuity Plans by institutionalizing teacher training on adaptive modular instruction, authenticity verification, and formative assessment. School heads may establish teacher learning communities focused on ADM strategies, real-time feedback routines, and learner monitoring systems. Parents and guardians should be provided with practical orientation materials and home learning guides to improve their capacity to support pupils without replacing pupils' own work. Teachers may design modules with clearer scaffolds, guided examples, and short validation tasks to support comprehension and improve assessment credibility. The district may also develop mechanisms for peer collaboration during class suspensions, such as structured group tasks, safe check-ins, and supervised community-based learning support. Future researchers may expand the study to other districts, include longitudinal learning outcome measures, and examine the effectiveness of the proposed intervention program in improving modular distance learning implementation.

Declarations

Ethics Approval

The study observed ethical research procedures, including administrative permission, voluntary participation, informed consent or assent as appropriate, confidentiality, anonymity, and the use of gathered data solely for academic purposes.

Informed Consent

Participants and concerned authorities were informed of the purpose of the study, the nature of participation, and their right to decline or withdraw without penalty.

Competing Interests

The authors declare no competing interests related to the conduct, interpretation, or publication of this study.

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Author Contributions

Michelle B. Naque served as primary researcher and manuscript author. Manuel B. Dayondon, PhD, provided scholarly supervision, technical guidance, and manuscript review.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings are available from the author upon reasonable request and subject to confidentiality and institutional ethics requirements.

AI Assistance Disclosure

AI-assisted tools were used only for language refinement, organization, formatting, and manuscript preparation support. The authors reviewed, verified, and retained full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

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