

# Self-Paced Learning in Exploring Noli Me Tangere During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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*During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippine government made sure that learning was still in force in the country's basic education system by utilizing a modular approach in delivering its programs. All lessons were to be completed without a teacher on-hand, where students will simply rely on their self-paced learning style in understanding and answering the written activities given in the modules. This study describes the self-paced learning process and experiences of students in the exploration of Jose Rizal's literary masterpiece, Noli Me Tangere. A phenomenological approach was adopted for this study, focusing on the lived experiences of the research participants during this period of learning under a protracted lockdown. Axial Coding was utilized to construct linkages among data to reveal codes, and emerging themes were analyzed. It is found that students were able to practice self-paced learning despite some negative feedback, while the stakeholders' support for students during the pandemic is individualized and vital to the student's learning experience.*

*Keywords: Covid-19, pandemic, modular approach, Noli Me Tangere, self-paced learning, thematic analysis*

## INTRODUCTION

Noli Me Tangere played a crucial role in the political history of the Philippines. In 1887, Jose Rizal brings out to the public his first novel, Noli Me Tangere which was written in Spanish, a searing formal accusation of clerical abuse as well as of colonial rule's shortcomings. The nineteenth-century novel was drawn from experience and the ideals of European liberalism. Rizal offered up a devastating critique of a society under Spanish colonial rule. Rizal paints a harrowing picture of his beloved but suffering country—the Philippines in a work that speaks eloquently not just to Filipinos but to all who have endured or witnessed maltreatment (Francia,2020). To continually boost deeper understanding and respect for Jose Rizal being considered the greatest among the Filipino heroes (ncaa.gov.ph,2017) and author of the said novel, the Department of Education promotes cultural awareness, and appreciation through Noli Me Tangere (deped.gov.ph). Aside from the never-ending respect for the hero and his novel, the Philippines mandates all public and private schools, colleges, and universities on the life and works, and writings of Jose Rizal particularly his novel Noli Me Tangere through passing Republic Act No. 1425 (GOVPH, 1956). Likewise, Noli Me Tangere is required reading for third-year junior high school students respectively. It is hoped that this paper shall support nationalism, patriotism, national identity, love of humanity, respect for human rights, and appreciation of the role of national heroes in the historical development of the country (DepEd, 2017).

On the other hand, public schools in the Philippines reopen in the middle of a still untamed coronavirus outbreak. The Department of Education (DepEd) maintains that the education of millions of Filipino students should not wait. To make sure that learning is still active, DepEd launched a modular learning approach. It is a form of distance learning that uses Self-Learning Modules (SLM) where interaction is done without having a face-to-face meeting. This means lessons were delivered outside the traditional face-to-face or online setup. SLM must adhere to the existing most essential learning competencies (MELCS) of the department. Schools are directed to refer to the MELCs in creating learning activity sheets, self-learning modules, and other instructional materials that are suited to the local context and diversity of learners while adapting to the challenges posed by COVID-19 (DM NO. 89, S. 2020). SLM includes sections of lectures and evaluation tools that serve as a complete guide for both teachers and students. DepEd assured that lack of access to technology should not be a problem as schools will be providing printed modules for students and personally delivered by the teachers themselves (Magsambol, 2020). Thus, all the government-funded junior high schools for the academic years 2019- 2021 adopted the modular mode of learning, and their students were given self-learning modules.

Moreover, self-paced learning is learning at a pace set by the learner. An instructor may not even be necessary, as all the lessons are designed to be completed without a facilitator on-hand. For example, there may be detailed instructions and quizzes at the end of each lesson to gauge a learner's progress and performance without the presence of the instructor (V Prountzos, 2015). Students don't need to complete the same assignments or learn at the same time as others. They can proceed from one topic or segment to the next at their speed (InsydeWebdesign, 2020). In connection, students have their distinct styles of the self-paced learning process. This type of learning is becoming increasingly popular as the education world shifts from the classroom to the internet and then goes back to home studies through self-learning modules, especially in this global Covid-19 Pandemic crisis. To achieve individual learning, each institution is adaptive to the learners' needs and the teachers have their unique instruction styles in creating their modules to support learners' competency.

Self-paced learning processes as mentioned in the study of Onah (2017) include self-efficacy and dimensions (or strategies) which were created to optimize the processes, such as intermediate goal setting, task strategies, time management, environment structuring, help-seeking, and self-evaluation was adapted for this study.

Hence, Grade 9 junior high school students who are enrolled in Noli Me Tangere class in Self-Learning Modules (SLM) in this new normal education set-up amidst Covid-19 Pandemic should do their best self-paced learning process which the paper generates and commend. This study aims to describe the self-paced learning process of students in exploring Noli Me Tangere during the pandemic. Self-paced learning techniques as perceived by students were identified. The study also brought surface the lived experiences of the participants in the process of their self-paced learning. Other stakeholders such as subject teachers, school administrators, and parents whose support is extraordinary in motivating the students/ children's respondents during the process of self-paced learning will also be coded. The study will be a basis for designing an extension project for the Filipino Department under the Secondary Program of the College of Education by way of crafting an action or intervention plan that will help students of the partner school in their self-paced learning processes.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS**

1. How may the students' self-paced learning be described in terms of:
  - 1.1 goal settings (GS),
  - 1.2 task strategies (TS),
  - 1.3 time management (TM),
  - 1.4 environment structuring (ES),
  - 1.5 help-seeking (HS), and
  - 1.6 self-evaluation (SE)?

2. Which among the self-paced learning dimensions is considered effective as perceived by the students?
3. What are the lived experiences of students in the process of self-paced learning amidst the pandemic?
4. How do stakeholders motivate and support students during the process of self-paced learning, to wit
  - a. Subject teachers,
  - b. School administrators,
  - c. Parents?

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

1. Goal Settings (GS) are the student's way of achieving learning.
2. Task Strategies (TS) is the student's style in accomplishing the set goal.
3. Time Management (TM) is about planning and controlling the amount of time for all the listed chores.
4. Environment Structuring (ES) is rearranging the physical structure to make it conducive to learning (Yen, et.al, 2016)
5. Help-Seeking (HS) is the student's desire in lending a hand to accomplish a certain task.
6. Self-Evaluation (SE) is the student's self-assessment

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The study utilized a Phenomenological inquiry approach. The wide readers will understand the lived experiences of students' self-paced learning techniques and other stakeholders' points of view and support in the exploration of Noli Me Tangere during the COVID – 19 pandemic. It employs a mixed-method descriptive approach to research. Online interviews were conducted to gather and coded the experiences of the participants on self-paced learning. The instrument of the study in the form of the questionnaire has three parts: (1) self-paced learning techniques (2) lived experiences of student participants in their self-paced learning techniques and (3) Open-ended questions, to be answered by concerned stakeholders respectively. This study adapted the instrument used by Santos et al (2021) entitled "Online Distance Learning Amidst the Pandemic COVID-19" and Onah and Sinclair (2017) entitled "Assessing Self-Regulation of Learning Dimensions in a Stand-alone MOOC Platform." It was modified to suit the objective of the study. MOOC online self-regulated learning questionnaire (MOSLQ) was also used in measuring self-regulated learning dimensions. Five-point Likert-type response format which constituted values ranging from 5-strongly agree to 1-strongly disagree was applied to collect learners' responses. Dimensions such as goal settings (GS), task strategies (TS), time management (TM), environment structuring (ES), help-seeking (HS), and self-evaluation (SE) were maximized. The questionnaire has constructs that the researcher used to determine the process and acceptance of self-paced learning in the exploration of the novel Noli Me Tangere during the pandemic. Another part of the questionnaire consisting of guide questions based on related literature was formulated to take note of the lived experiences of the student participants and the stakeholder's point of view. Axial Coding was utilized to construct linkages among data to reveal codes, and themes were analyzed to find out the common experiences of selected student participants and other stakeholders. The respondents of the study are 180 students, 25 teachers, 5 administrators, and 5 parents from the different government junior high schools in Bulacan that are using pure modules or remote print as the mode of teaching the students. Three experts from the field validated the questionnaires. Cronbach's alpha was computed in all questionnaires to measure the internal consistency of all the items. Having an average value of 0.851 for the questionnaire students suggest that the items are relatively consistent. The researcher used the five-point Likert - scale items with descriptive ratings.

**TABLE 1**  
**FIVE-POINT LIKERT SCALE WITH ITS DESCRIPTION**

Scale	Range	Descriptive Rating
5	4.5 – 5	Very strongly agree
4	3.5 – 4.49	Strongly agree
3	2.5 – 3.49	Agree
2	1.5 – 2.49	Disagree
1	1 – 1.49	Strongly disagree

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Description of the Students' Self-Paced Learning Process in Exploring Noli Me Tangere During the Modular Mode of Learning Amidst the Pandemic

**TABLE 2**  
**DETAILED PRESENTATION OF STUDENTS SELF-PACED LEARNING PROCESS**

Dimensions		MEAN	DESCRIPTION
Goal Setting (GS)	I know what I am going to achieve in this course	4.34	Strongly agree
	I have set aside time to study the course	4.01	Strongly agree
	I have high standards for my work in this course	4.20	Strongly agree
	I have set targets for all I want to achieve in this course	4.00	Strongly agree
	I do not see my engagement in the course as less important because it is an online course	<b>3.89</b>	Strongly agree
	I have written down the goals I plan to achieve by the end of this course	4.07	Strongly agree
		4.085	Strongly agree
Task Strategy (TS)	I work strategically to prioritize tasks to help me achieve my learning goals	4.29	Strongly agree
	I prepare for my study by reading the suggested background learning materials beforehand	4.55	Very strongly agree
	I set out my study agenda before engaging with the modules	4.22	Strongly agree
	I am prepared to tackle any challenging aspects of the work in this course	<b>3.96</b>	Strongly agree
		4.255	Strongly agree
Time Management (TM)	I have planned to use my calendar and notebook to devote the necessary time to my modules	4.33	Strongly agree
	I find an enjoyable time to study when I won't be distracted if planned.	4.18	Strongly agree

		4.255	Strongly agree
Environment Structuring (ES)	I choose my study location to avoid distractions	4.21	Strongly agree
	I find a comfortable place to study	4.48	Strongly agree
	I choose an appropriate place to work to study effectively	4.62	Very strongly agree
		4.44	Strongly agree
Help-Seeking (HS)	I plan to use the interactive communication channels provided to gain support from peers and tutors	3.98	Strongly agree
	I plan to participate in the course discussion forums to get the most out of the course	3.87	Strongly agree
		3.925	Strongly agree
Self-Evaluation (SE)	While engaging in this course, I will reflect on my study in each module	4.0	Strongly agree
	I will be proactive in engaging and reviewing progress in the learning path I select	3.98	Strongly agree
		3.99	Strongly agree
	<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.16</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>

### N- 180 Student Participants

Table 2 shows that the students were able to manage their time to study and answer their Noli Me Tangere modules in a location where they are comfortable as shown by the computed mean. They also know how to prioritize things accordingly to reach certain goals. Students are proactive and could reflect easily while engaging in the course. The overall mean of 4.16 is impressive; almost everybody strongly agrees that they were able to understand lessons and chapters of Noli me Tangere and were able to achieve their targets in their self-paced learning mode. Among the dimensions of self-paced learning, environment structuring received the highest mean of 4.44. This signifies that students consider their study area is an important factor in learning. This was supported by the study of Khann, et al (2019) when they found out that physical structure and facilities at home are significant variables in students' achievement. They recommended that children when they are studying at home should be provided a comfortable and well lighted and ventilated environment to promote students' overall development.

On the other hand, time management and task strategy received a mean of 4.255 which is a little bit lower than environment structuring but has the same description of strongly agree. It simply reveals that aside from the workspace of students, time management is also a factor in student success, retention, and graduation. In the study by Stewart, B. L., Miertschin, S., & Goodson, C. (2020) they specify that majority of students in their study use time management tools such as schedules, planners, and calendars to plan their assignments and other routines ahead of time. One item in their presentation states that 40% of the participants keep a time-based (daily, weekly, monthly) schedule planner or calendar, and the other 35% use planner to schedule for course study and homework. The same can be seen in table 2 wherein students strongly agree that calendars and notebooks are perceived to be an effective tool in scheduling tasks, and they also planned things ahead of time. In the study of Tullis & Benjamin (2011), they found out that those learners with control of study-time allocation significantly outperformed subjects with no control, even when the total study time is equated between groups. The self-paced group outperformed a group in which study time was allocated as a function of normative item difficulty. Another study confirms the capability of self-paced learning. In the study by Wang (2015), learners who are exposed to self-paced mobile learning integration (SMLI) scored higher on the test than those with traditional learning instruction, and they showed great satisfaction with the use of SMLI. These two studies support the result of the current study that learners who are utilizing self-paced learning could perform positively if they are on their own.

## Self-Paced Learning Techniques Are Considered Effective as Perceived by the Students

**FIGURE 1**  
**SELF-PACED LEARNING TECHNIQUES OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN NOLI ME TANGERE CLASS**

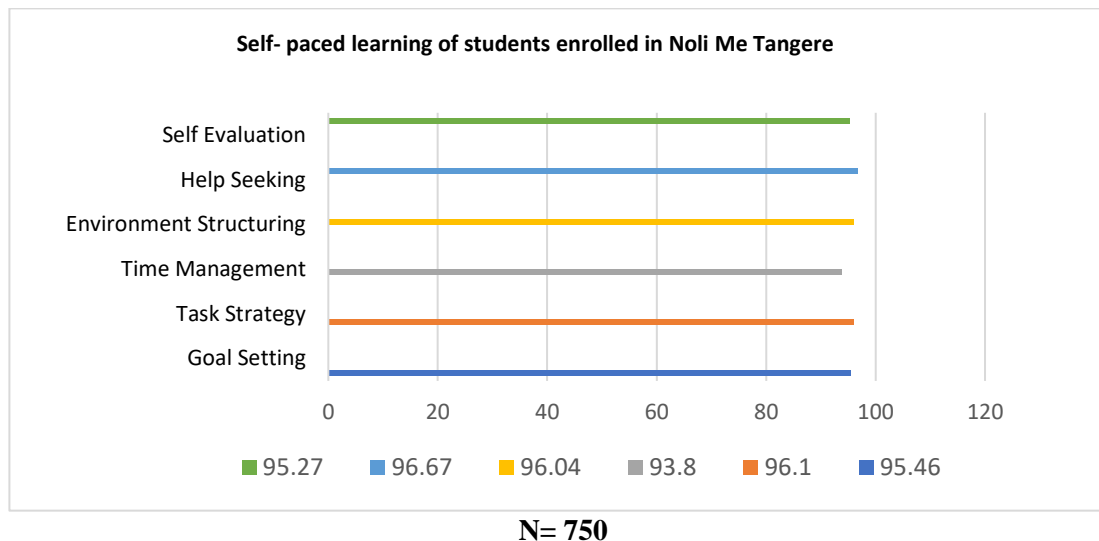


Figure 1 shows that all the self-paced dimensions as perceived by the learners are said to be effective. Almost all the student respondents strongly agree that help-seeking, environment structuring, time management, task strategy, and goal setting help them achieve their objectives in learning Noli Me Tangere's lessons. Learners are prepared to face different challenges that they may meet in the course. They did not even bother with the pandemic situation and the learning modality as well. They are guided by a strong will to finish what they have started despite challenges and problems during their self-paced learning process. This result would like to support the notion that in self-paced learning, students enhance their learning experience, they go beyond what their textbooks and instructors teach them. They could control their learning. And when they have control, they become even more interested in learning (*GradePower Learning*, 2018). The same concept was reiterated by Metcalfe (2009) as mentioned by Tullis & Benjamin, (2011) stating that successful self-guided time management and allocation will result in learning if accurately controlled and monitored.

### Lived Experiences of Students During Their Self-Paced Module Learning

Self-paced module learning is not easy nor too difficult. Some of the respondents are amazed at how the module works in getting good scores. Though the overall mean of 4.16 for this study is impressive, still students encountered a few problems in studying on their own using the Noli me Tangeranges module prepared by their teachers. Students are striving so hard to receive the needed knowledge and they exerted too much effort not only to pass the subject but to have a deeper understanding of the subject. Here are some direct responses that were taken from the respondents.

*\*S1- "The module needs more explanation for further understanding of the lessons, especially topics on abusive power and many others."*

*S2- "Learning is not achieved. I was not able to understand the need to study Noli Me Tangere."*

S3- *"Since hard copy, Noli Me Tangere is not that interesting anymore- I miss doing a role play which others made as a project before the pandemic"*

S4- *"I spent a lot of my time answering many exercises on Noli Me Tangere's different topics, wherein I almost ignored my other subjects."*

S5- *"I cannot answer the module alone; I usually ask the help of my parents to enlighten me on what to do because of too many exercises."*

*\*S1- Student 1*

The support of other members of the family was asked for him to finish the exercises in the module as mentioned by one student. S5 reiterated that the teacher who prepared the modules included a large number of enrichment activities which for him is too many. That is why he must request other family members explain to him what must be done and how to do it lightly. "Since my teacher requires me to answer all the exercises before submitting the module, I need family assistance," he added.

Another student (S4) shared the same experience. Because of too many exercises and activities, he almost ignored other subjects' requirements. Another thing a student missed in learning Noli me Tangere is role play. For that, he has the notion that Noli is not interesting anymore because everything is just in written/ module form. Self-paced learning allows students to take learning at their own pace, focusing on areas they are most interested in or want to understand a bit better. They see themselves as independent people who can learn new things without anyone helping them. But in some of the direct responses of the students in the current study, it is noticeable that few must call other family members to complete the module which is the reverse of the self-paced learning description. The learner can work alone but, in some cases, he still needs others to completion of the requirements set by the teacher. This is supported by Flavin (2018) posted in Rasmussen (2018), she wrote that just because the person is in self-paced learning does not mean he has to go it all alone. Sometimes he needs clarification on a task or someone to talk through a process. Self-paced learning has many benefits like it improves the retention of knowledge, boosts student's self-confidence, takes the pressure out of studying, enables a student to create an individual learning plan, allows a student to develop a personal learning style, develops critical thinking and problem-solving mindset and positively affects the overall student's performance (www. net,2021). As mentioned, self-paced learning is fantastic, but it requires discipline from the students' side. They must manage their time better and be motivated and eager to answer the task given to them or else they will most likely fall into procrastination, leading to overdue assignments.

Further, teachers' development of the module must be given enough time before its distribution to students. The module is proven helpful in students' learning process. Kiong et, al. (2022) recommended that a module can carry out the teaching and learning process if interactive module features are to be applied. They also reiterated that the module should be equipped with reinforcement activities with a clear rubric of skills assessment at the end of each chapter. Module design was the focus of a study conducted by Seago (2021) They call it a "video in the middle" VIM module design that incorporates "mathematical knowledge for teaching" (MKT) that provides multiple activities in which the preservice and in-service teachers appeared to have learned using this module design. To make the module responsive to the needs of the students who are studying the Noli Me Tangere, teachers together with the principal should come up with a module design that inclusion of its unique features not only to gain the students' interest but to instill the true essence of learning. Thus, module writing could be one of the topics in the teacher's onset seminar during summer vacation (DeJesus,2021)

### **Stakeholders' Motivation and Support to Students During Their Self-Paced Learning**

The Covid- 19 pandemic has been a stressful time for almost everyone. The young ages between 13 and 24 have been hit particularly hard. 65 % of Gen Z participants in the recent Youth Culture Poll 2021 said that education is important to them, and 46 percent said the pandemic had made it difficult to pursue their educational and career goals (Schimelpfening,2021). Further, the COVID-19 pandemic is a great

challenge to education systems worldwide. Students were affected and disrupted in many ways; not only on their level and course of study but also on their strategies on how to finish and submit projects/modules on time. This is where different stakeholders will come in to help students cope with the challenges of learning during the pandemic.

Respondents of the current study, to mention the subject teacher, school principal and parents shared their ways of supporting students. The result of the axial coding reveals that stakeholders are doing a lot of things; personal follow-up messages to students were made; the right number of supplies such as printers and bond papers were personally distributed by the principal to teachers who oversee module printing; offering academic assistance are at hand from parents' side. To sum it all up, stakeholders' support for students during the pandemic is becoming too personal. To read some of the direct responses, here are their statements:

*“Though the mode of learning is remote, I made sure that I have other materials that are readily available to students. If needed, I do message my students if there are queries on how they will study and answer exercises in the Noli Me Tangere module. I made sure to spend a little time with students who will ask for help.”*

– Filipino subject teacher

*“I assist our teachers in the distribution of modules. I see to it that all students have their copies of modules. I also check the content of the modules before their distribution. During their self-paced learning, we receive feedback from parents and students on how we will improve the content of the module and the distribution as well.”*

– School principal

*“I assist my son in answering his module. There are too many exercises and activities. If he doesn't understand the direction, I am ready to help.”*

– Parent 1

*I have offered my help to my children. I know they are struggling and as a parent, I need to nourish them with love, care and support amidst the pandemic.*

– Parent 2

One way to reduce pandemic stress is to communicate and connect with others. And this is one thing parents and subject teachers are doing with their kids and students. Parents are very supportive of their children. They explain thoroughly the direction of each activity if they are asked by their children and nourish them with extra care to avoid stress brought by the situation. Teachers are well prepared with their instructional materials and always ready in assisting their students. The same with the school principal. He checks if the modules' content is good quality and ready for distribution. In the study by Cao et al. (2020), the COVID-19-related stressors including academic delays, and economic effects on daily life were positively associated with anxiety symptoms of Chinese College students during the epidemic. Though measures were applied but have a specific impact on the education and the growth of students. Cao (2020) study recommended the help and support of society, families, and colleges to collaborate and resolve problems to provide timely crisis-oriented services to the students. Similar to the current study, the difference is that the subject teacher, school administrator, and parents' respondents are already doing their part in helping the students.

## **CONCLUSION**

Students were able to practice independent learning by answering their modules, at their own pace and at their convenient time and location. This study shows that students in this mode of learning could read, analyze, and answer modules of Noli Me Tangere amidst the pandemic; they perceived that they utilized



self-paced learning positively with the help and support of their teachers, school principal, and parents as well. This study also confirms through perceived experiences that SLM lessens the interest of the students in studying the Noli Me Tangere because they missed doing role-playing and other group performances. Students also experienced ignoring other subjects because of the many activities in the module. Nevertheless, the support of the other stakeholders is discerned by the students during the long year-round learning Noli Me Tangere in self-paced learning mode.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering all the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are drawn:

1. Students who are in the self-paced learning mode should be oriented and guided by the subject teacher, school principal, and parents to make learning Noli Me Tangere possible and successful.
2. Noli Me Tangere modules should be evaluated annually with regards to their content and activities including the proper giving of direction.
3. The teachers who are making the modules may consider design and content options in the inclusion and presentation of each lesson to make it more attractive and interesting to the students aside from being informative.
4. Stress reliever activities and seminars on time management may be given to students to lessen anxiety and increase academic performance.
5. The Secondary Program of the College of Education may come up with a modular design that will motivate the users to study a specific subject and to be distributed to the partner secondary institutions.
6. Further study may be considered in a bigger locale and another subject area.

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