Students' Perceptions on Zoom as Alternative to In- person Purposive Communication Classes

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ABSTRACT	Published Online: December 03, 2024

The whole world responded to the need of continuing learning through a safer modality at the onset of the COVID19 pandemic. New and existing online platforms became in-demand to bear the bulk of lessons, teaching, and student engagement. One of the existing online platforms that were favorably used by higher institutions was Zoom. This study investigates on students' perceptions on Zoom as a possible replacement for face-to-face modality for Purposive Communication (PURPCOM) class in the years ahead even after the ebb of the COVID19 pandemic. A total of 104 college students participated in an online Likert scale survey. Students' responses regarding the advantages and disadvantages of using Zoom in PURPCOM class were thematically analyzed. The results indicated that an average of 49%-80% of students had a positive perception on using Zoom in their PURPCOM class in terms of their feelings, impact on learning, impact on interaction, and the capacity of Zoom to replace the in-person PURPCOM class. An average of 6% -19% disagreed on using Zoom over in-person class, and the top disadvantage of Zoom is the issue of poor internet connection. It is recommended that the survey be given to additional number of respondents in order to get a more accurate data on students' perceptions in using Zoom as a replacement for the in-person PURPCOM class in future academic terms.

KEYWORDS:
Online, pandemic, survey, college, face-to-face class

1. INTRODUCTION

The world is now in its third year into the pandemic. Covid-19 has forced schools and universities to create online platform learning environments that can replace physical classrooms. The transition to online learning and teaching has been both unanticipated and blunt pressing educators and curriculum planners to come up with fast solutions that will make life and schooling go on.

This paper will explore students' perceptions on using Zoom as a possible replacement for in-person English class, particularly the Purposive Communication class even after the decline of the pandemic.

There is a notable decrease in COVID 19 cases globally from the beginning of 2023. World Health Organization reports that from the over 6.7 million new cases found from January to February 2023, there is a 92% decline; and from the 64,000 reported deaths in the same months, there is a decline of 47%, although there are still more than 755 million confirmed cases globally, and more than 6.8 million deaths confirmed (Weekly Epidemiological Update on COVID-19 - 15 February 2023).

During an interview with Harvard Gazette, WHO director Tedros Ghebreyesus expressed that the pandemic's recurring message is that no individual is secure until everyone is secure. He also stated that although the pandemic is still ongoing, there is hope on the horizon (Powell, 2022 Oct.11). According to officials from the World Health Organization, numerous countries were able to handle the COVID 19 pandemic pretty well due to the increased administration of vaccines, improvements in the effectivity of medicines, and herd immunity achieved by the massive number of those who have survived the disease. But on September of 2022, experts believed that the occurring death toll of 10,00 per week and the sustained universal transmission of the virus will hatch a dangerous new variant, and that threat has prevented them from declaring that COVID19 outbreak is finally over.

Many schools shut down during the span of the pandemic and this has brought devastating effects to school children. But

some colleges and universities were able to pull through and cope with the grueling task of uplifting students and assisting them to survive and thrive amidst the harshest conditions. COVID19 is here to stay in the world and schools, colleges, and universities really need to get equipped not just in fighting and preventing it, but also in building security measures to continue providing sustainable teaching and learning opportunities.

II. BACKGROUND

From the beginning of the lockdown many colleges and universities took a shot at creating online modules so that students will not be left behind with their mental, social and emotional growth. One of the most popular platforms favored by many schools is Zoom and it is the application that is considered the most useful from other media like Google Meet, Google Classroom, and LMS (Fuady, et.al.,2021). Zoom is a communications platform that grants users the ability to connect with video, audio, phone, and chat features. During the pandemic Zoom became a temporary replacement to the physical classroom. But now that we are into the third year of the COVID19 pandemic, and knowing that the virus is not going away but is actually mutating and producing different variants, it is safe to say that online classes via Zoom are here to stay. There may be hybridization of classes, but the online classroom though Zoom conferencing is expected to remain and even evolve. In fact, Zoom has upgraded their technology by connecting to other applications that teachers and students can use in the virtual classroom. Zoom classes have the advantage and capacity to record videos, store files, and share files for a period of 30 days (de Oliveira Dias, et.al. 2021).

The top advantage of online teaching and learning is protection from COVID19. Hence, the use of technology like Zoom applications has replaced the physical classroom for many schools and universities in the Philippines. Teachers were able to use a variety of technology and also provided opportunities to experiment with alternative teaching methods, tools, and assessments. Furthermore, many teachers felt that online teaching saves a lot of time that was previously consumed in commuting, it also saves a lot of money previously used in transportation, food, allowance, and other expenses spent outside the home. A study done by Manea, et.al.(2021) found that the benefits students get from online classes are both educational and personal. The educational benefits of online classes are the recorded lecture, the ability to attend classes anywhere in the world, and better access to educational materials on the platform. For students, the top personal advantage of online classes is reduced expenses for travel, rent, and food (Manea, et.al. 2021).

Taking into consideration the advantages of using Zoom in online teaching during the pandemic, this research will try to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the students' perceptions on Zoom as a replacement or alternative for in-person PURPCOM (Purposive Communication) classes?
2. What are the advantages of using Zoom for online learning that can be a replacement or alternative for in-person PURPCOM (Purposive Communication) classes?

Review of Related Literature

Joia & Lorenzo (2021) discussed the differential performance of hard skill and soft skill subjects in a technology-mediated setting, such as Zoom. Their study found that hard skill subjects are more prone to failing in achieving their educational objectives when moved to technology-mediated settings. But soft skill courses tend to be able to meet their objectives in a technologically-mediated environment such as Zoom. Hence, Zoom may be successful in replacing the in-person Purposive Communication class, which is a soft skill course.

Serhan (2020) noted the benefits of using Zoom as reported by students. The top advantage was flexibility, followed by ease of interaction, writing communication features, and the capacity to use multimedia. Students liked the flexibility of Zoom classes because they can open it and attend the classes anywhere. But Zoom classes were also reported to have disadvantages like interruptions, issues with the quality of interaction and feedback, lower educational quality, and technical glitches (Serhan, 2020).

Sorum, et.al. (2021) tried to find out if Zoom can replace the physical classroom, and their respondents perceived that Zoom lectures seem to work well even though there are limitations in interactions. Students particularly liked Zoom's capability to record classes, and be able to replay those classes whenever they want. Overall, the researchers found that digital teaching works well for both teachers and students alike (Sorum, et.al., 2021).

Putri and Suryaman (2022) found that students enjoyed using Zoom in their online English Speaking class, but more than half of them also got bored and made them lazy to study. Students were found to lose their motivation to learn English speaking skills via Zoom because they wanted direct face to face feedback from their teachers.

In South Korea, university students expressed satisfaction with using Zoom in EFL classes. Participants responded that the breakout rooms helped enhance their communication skills and provided more chances for communication (Lee, 2021). However, some students expressed dissatisfaction, mixed feelings, or neutral opinions about Zoom due to initial technical difficulties encountered while trying to join classes. But the researchers were aware that there are a multitude of other factors that affect learning and student satisfaction. Interestingly, Lee's study (2021) made use of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework which is also the same framework that will support this study.

There are mixed reactions and perceptions regarding the use of Zoom in online classes, and to ask whether Zoom classes can replace in-person classes will probably elicit polar views. Almost all related articles focused on students' perceptions on Zoom's advantages and disadvantages. But only the study of Joia & Lorenzo (2021) mentioned about the impact of Zoom online class to soft skills and hard skills disciplines. Majority of the studies focused on the cognitive effects of Zoom classes to students, but Manea, et.al.(2021) were the only ones who took into consideration personal factors that contribute to the practical benefits of online classes such as saving time, comfort, saving money, and health.

The goal of the study
The goal of this research is to give light to decision-makers and stakeholders including school administrators, teachers, and parents whether to go back to in-person classes in the next term or school year, or retain the full online classes using Zoom as an efficient replacement in conducting soft skills classes such as Purposive Communication (PURPCOM). A survey will be conducted among college students taking or have taken Purposive Communication in a tertiary school in Manila.

Theoretical Framework
In order to support the study, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework will be used as a guide to determine whether Zoom is capable of carrying out the learning experiences that can replace the in-person PURPCOM class. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) is a teaching model that aims to provide versatile, cooperative, and stimulating approaches to learning that involve both the process and substance of education.

The CoI framework can be applied to teaching students in remote learning environments. This framework was developed by Garrison, et. al. (2001). This process involves combining three interdependent elements, namely cognitive, social, and teaching presence, to create enriching and profound learning experiences. Research suggests that in online settings, learner interaction plays a crucial role in promoting student achievement (Fiock, 2020).

Cognitive presence refers to the degree to which learners are able to build and confirm understanding through ongoing introspection and discussion. Social presence, on the other hand, is the capacity of learners to express their individual traits within a group of learners, thereby presenting themselves as authentic individuals through a communication platform. The majority of research on social presence examines how students portray themselves and/or are perceived as genuine individuals in online environments (Fiock, 2020). Finally, teaching presence refers to the act of designing, organizing, leading, and guiding cognitive and social activities with the goal of attaining personally significant and educationally beneficial learning results. Previous research has shown that utilizing this framework helps establish a sense of belonging among students in online

courses, leading to improved learning outcomes and higher levels of perceived satisfaction with the course and faculty involvement (Serembus, 2021).
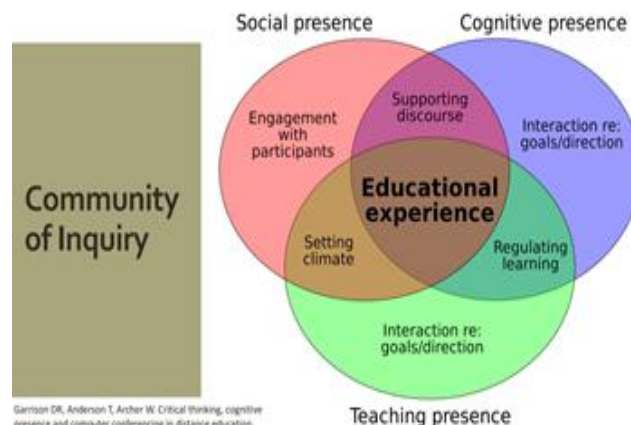

Fig. 1(Community of Inquiry)

Method
This research used an online survey through Google Form as the source of data that sought to know the perceptions of 104 students taking up or have taken PURPCOM in a tertiary school in Manila regarding the use of Zoom in their class. An Informed Consent Form was included in the survey and the students indicated whether they wanted to participate in the study or not. Responses of those who did not want to participate in the study were deleted and not included in the results. For anonymity and confidentiality, participants were not asked to write their names.

The survey questions used a 5-point Likert scale to determine students' perceptions on the level of their agreement or disagreement whether Zoom can replace in-person PURPCOM classes or not. The scale of the survey responses will range from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The survey adapted the questionnaire used by Serhan, 2020 and customized by the researcher to answer the two research questions. Two open-ended questions formulated by the researcher were analyzed through thematic analysis, which was adapted from the study of Manea, et.al., 2021. A qualitative method analyzed the answers of the students' perceptions on the advantages of Zoom classes that can replace in-person PURPCOM classes.

III. RESULTS
The responses collected from the 5-point Likert scale survey items were grouped into four categories that can reflect Zoom's capacity to incorporate the CoI framework's three presences – cognitive, social, and teaching (Garrison & Akyol, 2013). The categories are: students' perceived feelings toward using Zoom in class (cognitive presence), students' perceptions on the impact of using Zoom on their learning (cognitive presence), students' perceptions of their class participation using Zoom (social presence), and

students' perception on using Zoom as an alternative or replacement for in-person PURPCOM classes (cognitive and teaching presence).

The expected results are favorable students' responses regarding Zoom as a replacement for in-person PURPCOM class. This is for future decision-making regarding the modality of PURPCOM which is a soft skill class which Joia & Lorenzo (2021) found as successful in meeting its objectives in a technologically-mediated environment such as Zoom.

IV. DISCUSSION

In the following discussion, the term "agree" encompasses both "agree" and "strongly agree" answers, while the term "disagree" encompasses both "disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses in the survey. To provide an answer to the first research question about students' perception on using Zoom as an alternative or replacement for in-person PURPCOM classes, an average of 49% of students agreed that Zoom is more favorable than in-person PURPCOM class, while an average of 19% disagreed, and 32% remained neutral. The means of the students' responses for the nine survey items ranged from 3.2 to 4 which indicated a more favorable level of agreement for the use of Zoom instead of face-to-face modality for PURPCOM classes. In relation to the CoI framework, the survey results show that Zoom is able to project a favorable cognitive and teaching presence. Although in Table 1, Item 6, 58.7% thought that they would perform better in class if it will be done face-to-face. This means that students still consider the in-person modality in their classes. But the other items showed greater percentage of those who agreed in using Zoom as a modality for PURPCOM class. Those who remained neutral probably felt it safe to leave the decision to school authorities.

Table 1. Students' Perceptions on Zoom as Alternative or Replacement for In-person PURPCOM Class (N=104)

Item	Agree (%)	Dis-agree (%)	Neutral (%)
1. I think the activities given in ZOOM sessions motivated me to learn the content of PURPCOM class more than if it were given in face-to-face classes.	58.6	13.5	27.9
2. Using ZOOM made me more participative in class discussions than in face-to-face classes.	49	15.4	35.6
3. My attention on class activities in ZOOM was greater compared to face-to-face classes.	44.2	22.1	33.7
4. It was easier to take part in group tasks using Zoom rather than during in-person meetings.	54.8	23	22.1
5. I participated more in the ZOOM sessions in comparison to the traditional face-to-face classes.	46.1	17.3	38
6. I think I would perform better in class if it were in-person instruction, rather than using ZOOM.	58.7	12.5	28.8
7. I believe that ZOOM can replace the in-person PURPCOM class.	38.5	27.9	33.7
8. I think that ZOOM class is more advantageous for me personally than in-person class.	51	14.4	34.6
9. I think that ZOOM class is more practical than face-to-face class.	48.1	18.3	33.7

For students' feelings toward using Zoom in class, an average of 80% expressed enjoyment and comfort, and liked to use Zoom in other classes, while only 5.8% disagreed, with 14.8% neutral. Means of students' responses for the three items ranged from 4 to 4.2 which indicates a high level of enjoyment and likeability for using Zoom as a modality in class. Being able to reflect and have dialogue is part of cognitive presence (Fiock, 2020) and this is linked to the ability of students to recognize their enjoyment and comfort in using Zoom.

Table 2. Students' feelings toward using Zoom in class (N=104)

Item	Agree (%)	Dis-agree (%)	Neutral (%)
1. Overall, I enjoyed using ZOOM during the PURPCOM class.	82.7	3.9	13.5
2. It is comfortable to use ZOOM in PURPCOM class.	86.5	2.9	10.6
3. I also like using ZOOM in other classes.	71.2	10.6	20.2

The students' perceptions on the impact of Zoom on their learning (cognitive presence), an average of 75% agreed that Zoom modality aided and increased their learning, and also allowed flexibility in their schedule. Only an average of 5.16% disagreed on the impact of Zoom on their learning, and an average of 20% is neutral. The means of the students' responses for the five items range from 3.8 to 4.2 which is on the higher level of agreement regarding Zoom making a favorable impact on their learning in PURPCOM class.

Table 3. Students' perceptions on the Impact of Zoom on their Learning (N=104)

Item	Agree (%)	Dis-agree (%)	Neutral (%)
1. I believe that ZOOM allowed flexibility in my learning schedule	84.7	2.9	12.5
2. I believe that using ZOOM increased my learning in class.	63.4	10.5	26
3. Using ZOOM aided me in learning the course content in PURPCOM.	76.9	1	22.1
4. Using ZOOM aided me to become confident in the course.	74	5.7	20.2

5. Using ZOOM helped me engage in class in ways that benefited my learning.	74	5.7	20.2

For students' perceptions of Zoom's impact on their class interaction (social presence), the means of the students' responses for the five items range from 3.8 to 4.4 which is on the higher level of agreement regarding Zoom increasing their class interaction. Hence, Zoom is able to convey social presence.

Table 4. Students' perceptions on the impact of Zoom in their class interaction (N=104)

Item	Agree (%)	Dis-agree (%)	Neut ral (%)
1. Using ZOOM motivated me to participate actively in class activities.	63.4	10.5	26
2. Using ZOOM enhanced my interaction with my teacher.	62.5	11.4	26
3. Using ZOOM increased my interaction with my classmates.	50	17.3	32.7

Regarding the second research question on students' perceptions on the advantages of Zoom, 90.4% identified "Easier to attend anywhere" as the top advantage, 73.1% for "Saves time" and "More relaxed setting," followed by "Saves money" 71.2%, "Flexible time" 69.2%, "Lesser health risk" 57.7%, "Easier screen sharing" gets 55.8%, while "Allows multimedia sharing" is 53.8%. There is one who wrote "It gives students who have an OFW (Overseas Filipino Worker) parent a chance to learn while taking care a minor sibling at home," and one who added "I get to think more before acting unlike when it's face-to-face where my impulsive actions are clearly irreversible." These results agree with Serhan's (2000) findings that the top advantage of Zoom is its flexibility in attending classes anywhere in the world. The results also agree with Manea's findings (2021) that students identified personal advantages of using Zoom such as saving time and money, comfortable work setting, and lesser health risks.

Table 5. Students' Perceptions on the Advantages of Zoom (N=104)

Advantages	%
Saves money	71.2
Saves time	73.1
More relaxed setting	73.1
Easier screen sharing for presentations	55.8
Allows multimedia	53.8
Easier to attend class anywhere	90.4
Lesser health risk	57.7
Flexible time	69.2
It gives students who have an OFW parent a chance to learn while taking care a minor sibling at home	1
I get to think more before acting unlike when it's face-to-face where my impulsive actions are clearly irreversible	1

To balance out and avoid biases leaning towards the advantages only, students were also asked to write their perceived disadvantages of Zoom. The results of the survey verify Serhan's findings (2020) regarding the disadvantages of using Zoom according to students. The top disadvantage in this study however is poor internet connection, followed by distraction and less social interaction. Technical problems like broken microphone, and difficulties in groupings both got 8%. Less motivation, very draining and different learning style followed next. Interestingly, Putri and Suryaman (2022) found that students greatly perceived that they were less motivated in studying when using Zoom. But, in this study, 58.6% of students perceived that using Zoom motivated them to learn the PURPCOM content (Table 1. Item 1). Comparing these numbers in Table 6 with the results of the advantages in Table 5, it is evident that students perceive Zoom as more advantageous rather than disadvantageous.

Table 6. Students' Perceptions on the Disadvantages of Zoom

Disadvantages	%
Poor Internet connection	36
Distractions	14
Technical Problems	8
Problems with Grouping	8
Less social Interactions	14
Very draining	1
Motivation	3
Learning style does not fit	1

V. CONCLUSION

Since COVID19 is here to stay, online classes are one of the best safeguards in protecting students, teachers, and school personnel from it. From the data gathered about students' perceptions on Zoom as an alternative or replacement for soft skill courses like PURPCOM, it can be inferred that and average of 49% - 80% of students perceived Zoom as an advantageous platform to use in their PURPCOM class, whereas an average of 6% -19% disagreed on using Zoom over in-person class. Zoom also allows a Community of Inquiry that is able to project cognitive, teaching, and social presences (Garrison & Akyol, 2013) that have positive influences on students' online learning experiences. Other factors that students' agreed on are comfort and enjoyment in

using Zoom, impact on learning, impact on class interaction, and a 49% agreement that Zoom class can replace in-person PURPCOM class. Although one item (Table 1, Item 6) shows that 58.7% of students perceive that they would perform better in face-to-face classes, all the other questions in the survey yielded a favorable level of agreement towards using Zoom as the modality for PURCOM class given its various advantages like relaxed setting, money and time saving, flexibility, and availability to use anywhere. This research can be replicated and further be expanded to gather more data to have a greater impact in the decision-making for the modality of PURPCOM classes. This study can also be replicated to determine students' perceptions on Zoom as the modality for other soft skill courses. It is recommended that additional number of respondents take the survey in order to get a more accurate data on students' perceptions in using Zoom as a replacement for the in-person PURPCOM class in future academic terms. Future research may also include more questions on students' perceptions regarding face-to-face modality to have a wider scope on students' preference for their PURPCOM class.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

VII. DISCLOSURE

The author has no conflicts of interest in this work.

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