

ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES ON LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OF GRADUATE EDUCATION STUDENTS

Marwin D. Sarandin¹, Mhel Ryan F. Flores²,

¹College of Education, Romblon State University, Philippines

²College of Education, Romblon State University, Philippines

Corresponding Author: Marwin D. Sarandin

Email: marwinsarandin@rsu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT: *The need for graduate students’ attitudes and experiences in using Learning Management System (LMS) is integral in ensuring that professionals can pursue graduate studies even in the middle of a pandemic. This qualitative study explored the attitudes and experiences of 40 graduate students in a rural Philippine state university toward LMS. Convenience sampling was used to identify participants who enrolled for two consecutive school years. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and emergent themes were identified. The findings revealed diverse attitudes toward LMS use. Many participants expressed optimism, indicating LMS as a valuable tool for improving flexibility, efficiency, and digital skills development. Features such as centralized material access, automated grading, and progress tracking were particularly appreciated. However, challenges included technical difficulties, internet connectivity issues, and unfamiliarity with the platforms. Some preferred traditional face-to-face learning, citing its interactive and hands-on nature. Mixed perspectives emerged, balancing LMS’s benefits against limitations such as system glitches, lack of offline accessibility, and complex interfaces. Despite the challenges in using LMS, the participants overcame difficulties with academic guidance, peer support, and family assistance. The study stresses the need for improvements in LMS usability, offline functionality, user-friendly guides, and strengthened internet infrastructure. Recommendations include providing training sessions, interactive features, and enhanced technical support to address identified challenges. Moreover, institutions can maximize LMS effectiveness and inclusivity, benefiting graduate students and other learners in online and hybrid settings.*

Keywords: attitudes, experiences, graduate education students, Learning Management System (LMS), COVID-19 pandemic

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly constrained access to education as a result of prolonged quarantine measures and restrictions on physical mobility. In response to the exigencies posed by the pandemic, schools and higher education institutions adopted a range of alternative instructional strategies to sustain teaching and learning amid social and physical limitations [1]. According to a UNESCO report released in April 2020, more than 90% of the global student population was affected by school closures caused by varying degrees of lockdowns and travel restrictions, which necessitated the suspension of face-to-face (FTF) classes [2]. By June 2020, this figure declined to approximately 67%, reflecting the gradual adaptation of education systems to alternative delivery modes. Despite these adjustments, ensuring continuous learner engagement during the pandemic remained a critical concern across the education sector [3]. In the Philippine context, Sayaf [4] noted that the education sector responded to the crisis through the rapid integration of e-learning systems and virtual class modalities across basic, tertiary, and graduate education. Similar conditions were observed in graduate programs nationwide, where prolonged lockdowns prompted a transition to online learning platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom, EasyClass, and Moodle [5]. This sudden shift highlighted the necessity of well-designed blended learning frameworks that extend beyond the mere use of digital platforms. Specifically, teachers are required to perform an active moderating role in online discussions by facilitating interaction, providing clear explanations, and guiding students’ meaningful participation within learning management systems (LMS) [6]. The study aimed to determine the attitudes and experiences on Learning Management System (LMS) of graduate program students. Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated an unprecedented transition from traditional face-to-face

instruction to online, modular, and hybrid learning modalities, thereby reshaping teaching and learning practices in higher education and influencing their long-term direction.

2. Methods

This study followed the qualitative design, particularly the case study research design [7]. The participants in this study were 40 graduate students from a rural Philippine public state university who were enrolled in various graduate programs in education for two years. Convenience sampling was used to identify only those who had enrolled for two consecutive school years during the COVID-19 pandemic and those who had the experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched were included [8]. The participants only included those who are teaching in public elementary and secondary schools in one island province in the Philippines. Semi-structured in-depth phenomenological interview guide was validated by five experts and were used to gather relevant data [7, 8]. Hycner’s [9] five-step Explication Process was used to create, label, and analyze themes. Ethical considerations were observed such as informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality of data [10].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Emerging themes on attitudes of graduate students on Learning Management System (LMS)

Emerging Theme	Sub-theme	Categories	Code
Positive Attitudes towards LMS	Optimism	Enthusiasm for New Learning Tools	Excitement
		Appreciation for Convenience	Ease of Use Flexibility of Access Tracking of Progress

	Openness	Recognition of LMS as a Growth Opportunity	Skills Development Technology Adaptation
Negative Attitudes towards LMS	Discomfort	Stress in using LMS Fear of Technical Challenges	Overwhelm with New Technology Limited Digital Literacy Connectivity Issues Troubleshooting Issues
	Resistance to Digital Learning	Preference for Traditional Learning Methods	Comfort with Face-to-Face Interactions Hands-on Learning Preference
	Mixed Attitudes towards LMS	Acceptance with Reservations	Apprehension on Usability Balancing Excitement with Concerns Perceived Technical Issues Features and Functionality Concerns User-friendliness

how LMS features enable participants to stay on top of deadlines and monitor their academic progress. Participant 17 shared, *"The calendar and announcement features were the most useful for me because I am reminded of the deadlines and changes in schedules."*

The final sub-theme, 'Openness,' indicates participants' acknowledgment of LMS as a tool for personal and professional growth. The category 'Recognition of LMS as a Growth Opportunity' shows how participants viewed LMS as a chance to develop new skills. Participant 24 shared, *"I saw this as a chance to learn something new, even if it was challenging."* Meanwhile, the category 'Technology Adaptation' captures how participants gradually became more proficient with LMS. Participant 8 explained, *"Using LMS made me more resourceful and tech-savvy. It's nice to know that distance is not an issue to keep up with your studies."*

The second emerging theme, 'Negative Attitudes towards LMS,' reflects participants' frustrations and challenges when using LMS.

The sub-theme 'Discomfort' includes the category 'Stress in Using LMS,' which captures how participants felt overwhelmed when first introduced to the platform. Participant 4 admitted, *"In reality, I found it difficult to use Google Classroom and Google Meet. I found the numerous buttons and links confusing. And it was also embarrassing to ask for others' guidance."* The category 'Fear of Technical Challenges' further illustrates the anxiety caused by unreliable internet connectivity and troubleshooting difficulties. Participant 6 noted, *"The main challenge is the slow internet connection in our place. At times, I cannot download the files or attend the live sessions."* Similarly, Participant 1 shared frustration with technical issues: *"I am very frustrated every time I cannot access the files due to technical glitches."*

The sub-theme 'Resistance to Digital Learning' includes the category 'Preference for Traditional Methods'. Participants frequently mentioned missing the personal interaction and hands-on approach of face-to-face learning. Participant 22 explained, *"I still feel that LMS lacks the personal interaction that traditional teaching provides, which I find essential for a deep understanding of mathematics."* Similarly, Participant 27 remarked, *"I still prefer traditional methods for math education because LMS lacks the hands-on, interactive approach that mathematics needs."* This sentiment was echoed by Participant 10, who stated, *"I was unsure. I didn't know if it would work well for my subjects in my station, but for a masteral student, it would be better."*

Finally, the third emerging theme, 'Mixed Attitudes towards LMS,' reflects participants' attempts to balance the benefits and challenges of LMS. The sub-theme 'Acceptance with Reservations' captures participants' mixed feelings about LMS. The category 'Balancing Excitement with Concerns' includes statements where participants acknowledged LMS's potential while expressing reservations about its usability. Participant 9 said, *"I was excited but also worried about managing it with my workload."* Participant 10 noted the tension caused by internet instability: *"The internet was a*

The first emerging theme, "Positive Attitudes towards LMS," explains how participants perceived LMS as a valuable tool for facilitating learning during the pandemic.

Under the sub-theme 'Optimism,' the category 'Enthusiasm for New Learning Tools' captures the excitement participants felt when exploring the Learning Management System (LMS) for the first time. Many participants embraced the novelty of LMS despite initial challenges. For example, Participant 7 expressed, *"Technology has always fascinated me, and I saw the pandemic as an opportunity to explore new ways of teaching and learning."* Similarly, Participant 1 reflected, *"At first, I felt overwhelmed because I was not used to using LMS. But I was looking forward to it too, as it was something new, and I knew it was part of my professional growth."* This initial sense of enthusiasm was tempered by the steep learning curve associated with adopting new technology.

Another sub-theme, 'Appreciation for Convenience,' explains participants' recognition of LMS as a tool that simplified their learning experience. The category 'Ease of Use' reflects how LMS made tasks like organizing assignments and accessing materials more efficient. Participant 16 stated, *"I realized that it was not that difficult to use. Once I got used to it, I appreciated how convenient it was for organizing materials and assignments."* The category 'Flexibility of Access' further shared how the LMS allowed participants to study at their own pace. Participant 7 noted, *"The accessibility of materials and the flexibility of schedules were beneficial."* Additionally, the category 'Tracking of Progress' illustrates

problem. Sometimes it was slow, especially when trying to attend online classes or submit assignments on time."

The sub-theme 'Perceived Technical Issues' includes categories such as 'System Glitches and Connection Problems.' These issues often led to frustration, as described by Participant 10, who recounted, "One time, I almost missed the deadline for an assignment because of poor internet connection. Luckily, I managed to submit it last minute after going to another area with better signal."

Finally, the sub-theme 'Features and Functionality Concerns' indicate participants' concerns about the platform's limitations. The category 'Limited Offline Access' specifies the need for LMS features that work without constant internet connectivity. Participant 7 suggested, "It would help if I could work offline and sync progress later." The category 'Complex Interface' further illustrates how some participants struggled to navigate LMS. Participant 24 shared, "The interface wasn't very user-friendly, making it confusing for first-timers."

Table 2. Emerging them on the experiences of graduate students in using Learning Management System (LMS)

Emerging Theme	Sub-theme	Categories	Code
Efficiency and Organization of Use	Streamlined Processes	Centralized Materials	Quick Access Simple Downloading Process Output Tracking Feedback
		Automated Grading	Immediacy Students' Progress Availability
Adaptability and Growth	Continuous Learning	Learning New Features	FAQs Accessibility Skills Development
		Improving Technical Skills	Resolving Technical Issues
	Digital Agility	Developing Confidence in Technology Use	Technology Confidence Use Learning by Doing Feedback Loop
Collaboration and Support	Strengthened Learning and Achievement	Academic Guidance	Professor Support Family Member Support
		Social Support	Classmate Assistance Peer Assistance
Limitations of LMS Usage	Gaps in Features	Lack of Integrative Features	Offline Accessibility Embedded User Guide Automatic

External Challenges	Reliance on Internet Stability	Progress Saving Unstable Internet Connectivity
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The first emerging theme "Efficiency and Organization of Use" reflects participants' appreciation of how LMS streamlined their academic tasks.

Under the sub-theme 'Streamlined Processes,' the category 'Centralized Materials' is represented by the codes 'Quick Access and Simple Downloading Process.' Participants valued LMS for organizing materials in one place, making it easy to access and download. Participant 16 shared, "LMS provided a centralized platform where I could access all the resources I needed for my classes." Similarly, Participant 10 noted, "It was easy to upload work and follow the schedule because everything was in one place." The simple downloading process was particularly beneficial for participants juggling multiple responsibilities as both teachers and students.

Another sub-theme, 'Automated Grading,' presents the efficiency of LMS tools in managing academic evaluations. The category 'Output Tracking,' with codes such as 'Feedback Immediacy and Students' Progress Availability,' indicates how LMS made grading transparent and timely. Participant 7 explained, "The grading system was transparent, and I could see my scores immediately after quizzes, which helped me track my progress." Participant 8 also appreciated this feature, stating, "The grading tools and notifications made it clear which tasks were completed and which were pending."

The second emerging theme which is 'Adaptability and Growth' details participants' journey of continuous learning and adjustment to digital tools.

The sub-theme 'Continuous Learning' reflects participants' willingness to explore and adapt to new LMS features. The category 'Learning New Features,' coded as 'FAQs Accessibility,' shows how the participants relied on built-in help sections to navigate the LMS they use. Participant 9 shared, "I used the FAQs to better understand how to navigate the LMS and resolve issues."

Under the sub-theme 'Digital Agility,' participants reported improving their technical skills. The category 'Improving Technical Skills' included codes such as 'Skills Development and Resolving Technical Issues.' Participant 1 recounted, "I learned how to use the features, and it helped organize materials and submit assignments." Additionally, 'Developing Confidence in Technology Use' emerged as a category, with codes such as 'Learning by Doing and Feedback Loop.' Participant 24 described this process: "Initially, I was unsure about how to use the LMS, but with practice and help from classmates, I became more confident." One participant concluded "I find it encouraging to help my classmates since we are all new to applications like Zoom, Google Classroom, etc." Meanwhile, participant 6 added, "Using LMS made me realize that I could adapt and learn new tools despite my initial hesitation."

The next emerging theme "Collaboration and Support" elaborates how participants relied on academic and social networks to maximize LMS usage.

The sub-theme 'Strengthened Learning and Achievement' focuses on the role of academic guidance. The category 'Academic Guidance,' with the code 'Professor Support,' shows the crucial role professors played in supporting students. Participant 5 shared, *"Whenever I had issues, I would contact our professor, and they were very understanding and helpful."* This validates the findings reported by Phan et al. [11] that highlight the critical role of teacher characteristics in shaping students' online learning attitudes. The way a teacher handles the class, guides the students, motivates them despite the challenges of online learning posit another set of challenges that is different from face-to-face learning.

The sub-theme 'Social Support' reflects the community's role in enabling participants to navigate the LMS effectively. The category 'Family Member Support' stresses the help participants received at home. Participant 4 shared, *"My children helped me learn the basics of Google Classroom and Google Meet, which made the transition easier."* The 'Classmate Assistance' category highlights the importance of peer collaboration. Participant 17 remarked, *"Whenever I struggled with the system, I reached out to my classmates, and they guided me step-by-step."* Peer support was crucial for building confidence and ensuring academic success.

Lastly, the emerging theme "Limitations of LMS Usage" details the challenges and barriers participants faced while using LMS.

The sub-theme 'Gaps in Features' explains areas where participants felt the LMS lacked essential functionality. The category 'Lack of Integrative Features' includes codes like 'Offline Accessibility' and 'Embedded User Guide.' Participant 27 noted, *"It would help if LMS had offline capabilities so I could work without worrying about unstable internet."* Additionally, the absence of user-friendly guides was a recurring concern. Participant 24 mentioned, *"It would be better if there were more tutorials or a step-by-step guide to help first-timers."*

Another sub-theme, 'External Challenges,' captures the reliance on external factors such as internet connectivity. The category 'Reliance on Internet Stability,' coded as 'Unstable Internet Connectivity,' highlights a critical limitation faced by participants in remote areas. Participant 6 shared, *"The main challenge was the slow internet connection in our barangay. I often had to travel to the town center to access stable internet."* Similarly, Participant 10 stated, *"There were times when I couldn't log in or submit assignments on time due to poor connection."* This contrasts with the study of Mundir & Umiarso [12], as external infrastructure issues were found, specifically unstable Internet connectivity in remote areas, which were reported as a dominant and critical barrier to LMS use, affecting the ability to submit tasks on time and potentially leading to system glitches.

The graduate students' attitudes LMS during the pandemic presented a spectrum of positive, negative, and mixed perspectives. Many students expressed optimism, seeing LMS as a valuable tool for facilitating learning, improving organization, and enhancing flexibility in managing academic tasks. LMS features such as centralized material access, progress tracking, and automated grading were widely

appreciated for their efficiency and convenience. Additionally, students recognized LMS as a platform for personal and professional growth, cultivating adaptability and developing digital skills. In line with previous studies, this indicates that LMS features, such as centralized material access and progress tracking, were widely appreciated for their efficiency and convenience.

However, some students experienced stress and discomfort due to unfamiliarity with the platform, technical challenges, and reliance on internet stability. For others, resistance to LMS stemmed from a preference for traditional, face-to-face learning methods that offer more interactive and hands-on approaches. Mixed attitudes also emerged, with students balancing the advantages of LMS against its limitations, including system glitches, lack of offline accessibility, and a complex interface. Overall, while LMS proved to be a critical tool for continuing education during the pandemic, the challenges it posed the need for improved usability, feature enhancements, and support systems to maximize its potential and inclusivity in various learning contexts.

In terms of their experiences with LMS during the COVID-19 pandemic, the thematic analysis revealed a combination of positive and negative reactions, with some participants indicating both the benefits and limitations of LMS use. Many students appreciated LMS for streamlining academic tasks, offering centralized access to materials, and providing automated grading that enhanced efficiency. Features such as easy access to resources and immediate feedback were valued, as they helped students stay organized and track their progress. Furthermore, LMS supported continuous learning and the development of technical skills, nurturing confidence in using digital tools. Online classes provided a suitable alternative in terms of acquiring learning content. However, online teaching was not fully equivalent to traditional study abroad, as the approach was not able to offer broader opportunities, such as communication with others and access to social and cultural experiences [13].

However, challenges also emerged, including issues with system features such as a lack of offline access and the absence of comprehensive user guides, which were identified as barriers, especially for first-time users. Internet connectivity issues pose significant obstacles, particularly for graduate students in remote areas, which in turn has affected their ability to complete tasks on time. Despite these hurdles, the participants found support through academic guidance, peer assistance, and family help, which played a key role in overcoming difficulties and maximizing the effectiveness of LMS. While previous studies have focused on LMS technical quality, design elements, and feature richness [14][15], this research notes the importance of the user experience and external systemic factors (internet infrastructure, peer support) which, despite high-scoring platforms like Moodle, can still lead to mixed or negative student attitudes.

This provides new insights into how general positive attitudes, as quantified by studies like Phan *et al.*, [11], coexist with significant system-level frustration, revealing the internal "Mixed Attitudes" students hold when balancing LMSs utility against environmental flaws. Likewise, the results reinforce the global need for harmonized and

collaborative efforts to develop cost-effective and user-friendly tools that address a wide variety of concerns and challenges to the education sector, thus preventing future educational crises [16].

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The LMS are generally seen as a helpful tool for maintaining learning continuity during the pandemic. On the other hand, it also posed the need for improvements in its design and infrastructure. Resolving these issues, such as offline accessibility, more user-friendly guides, and enhanced support from both the professors and other technically-adept people, could further enhance its effectiveness in online and hybrid learning conditions.

To address the diverse attitudes shown by the participants toward LMSs, it is recommended that educational institutions adapt a more flexible and supportive learning environment that even graduate students can benefit. This can be achieved by offering more hands-on, interactive features within the LMS to appeal to students who prefer face-to-face learning. Additionally, increasing the availability of training sessions or tutorials can help reduce stress and discomfort for students unfamiliar with the platform.

It is also recommended that the university also address the key challenges identified by students, such as the lack of offline access, system glitches, and unclear user guides. Enhancing LMS features to include offline accessibility and providing comprehensive, user-friendly guides would help students, particularly those in remote areas, navigate the platform more effectively. Furthermore, strengthening the province's internet infrastructure and offering additional technical support would ensure that graduate students can overcome connectivity issues and manage their academic tasks with ease. Lastly, providing continuous academic and peer support through designated channels the university can identify could help students resolve issues quickly and enhance their overall learning experience.

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