



# Online learning support to reinforce motivation of university students during homeschool exodus

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## ABSTRACT

Due to the perplexity of students' experience during online learning, they are demotivated in the current academic set-up. The support that they receive is crucial for their academic journey. This study aimed to determine the learning support to reinforce students' motivation during homeschool exodus. It also examines how they deal with emergency remote education and the learning support they need to maximize their motivation during their exodus to homeschool classes. Guided by the principles of content analysis, analysis of the transcripts elucidate that students desire for digital empathetic language, relational, financial, familial, environmental, and technological learning support to reinforce their learning motivations and engage them for academic continuity during this emergency education. Drawing on motivation through context-specific materials, scholarship support, positive feedback, socialization strategies, and group dynamics during online learning can encourage students to persevere academically in times of radical changes.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, online learning, learning support, engagement, motivation, reinforcement

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## INTRODUCTION

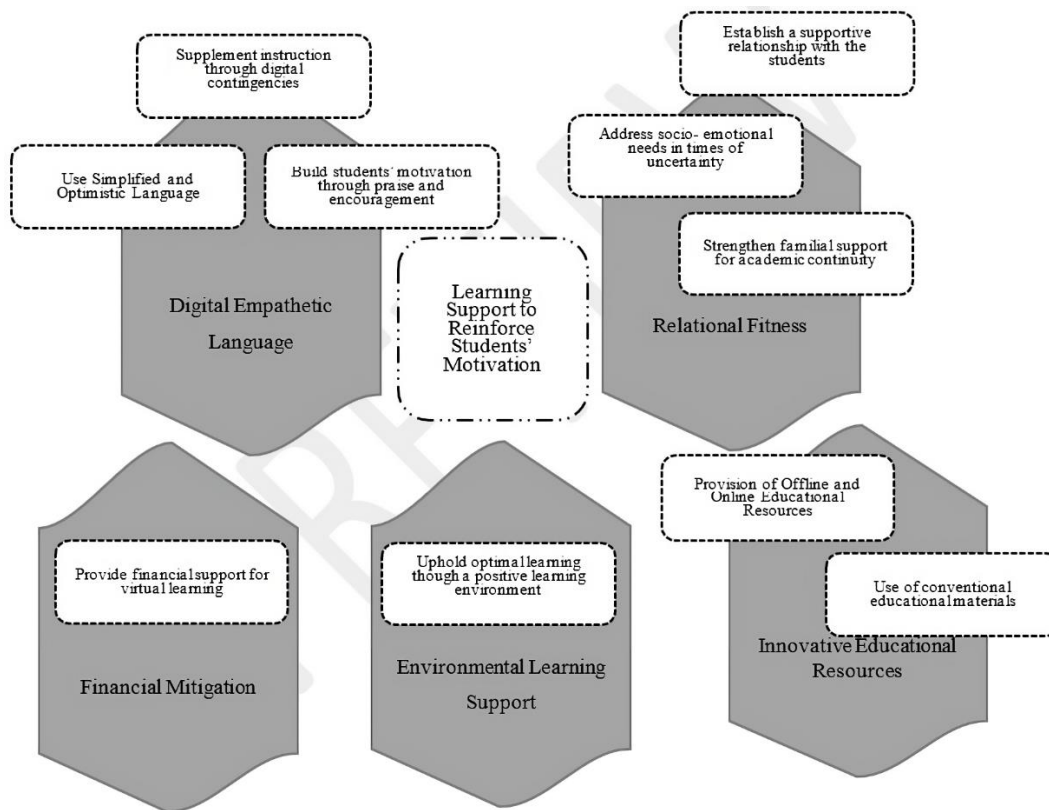
A crucial difference in principles, pedagogy, and practices is seen between online learning and emergency remote education (ERE). Hodges et al. (2020) pointed out that online learning is well-planned and is qualitatively different in instructional delivery during a crisis or disaster. Hence, educational institutions should demarcate these distinctions when evaluating their ERE. Bozkurt and Sharma (2020a) stressed that online learning is a flexible alternative to learning that considers the context, engagement, and needs of the students and is more than simply uploading educational content on the Internet. The comprehensive process of online distance education involves meticulous planning, design, and goal determination to establish an effective learning ecology that empowers students with "agency, responsibility, flexibility, and choice" (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020, p. ii).

In contrast, what the educational organizations are pursuing during this massive online experiment can be rightly termed as ERE, which is a temporary solution (Hodges et al., 2020) to prevent disruption of learning during the sudden transition to the virtual environments. ERE is the development of a rapid curriculum (Crawford et al., 2020) that is mandatory and indispensable during these critical times. It is a pedagogical obligation that involves practices such as uploading of teaching materials or sharing of online or offline tools (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020b). Hence, ERE or which some authors termed as

emergency online learning (EOL) (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020; Hussein et al., 2020) cannot equate the established rigors, effectiveness, and standards of online education as pointed out in previous studies (Patrick & Powell, 2009; Pozzi et al., 2019; Yuwono & Sujono, 2018).

Transitioning to virtual mode of learning is inevitable during pandemic, which has its opportunities and drawbacks. Part of the opportunities is not causing disruption to the learning of the students (Huang et al., 2020; Karalis, 2020) despite the emergency. In contrast, some students experience strident inequalities in the educational horizons (Grewenig et al., 2020; Haeck & Lefebvre, 2020) due to the heightened increase of neoliberalism during the pandemic.

Students experience educational challenges during the shift to ERE. They encounter pedagogical, technological, psychological, and social challenges, etc. (Ferri et al., 2020; Khlaif & Salha, 2020; Maqsood et al., 2021) that cause nuanced to their learning endeavors in ERE. For instance, a study (Ferri et al., 2020) revealed that online learning problems of the students include the abundance of online resources and learners' lack of interactivity and motivation, among others. Spatial separation, self-isolation, quarantine, social and economic discord, and misinformation (particularly on social media) are all significant contributors to unusual sadness, fear, frustration, helplessness, loneliness, and nervousness (Ahorsu et al., 2022; Sakib et al., 2020) among students during online learning.



**Figure 1.** Themes and categories on online learning support to reinforce students' motivation (Source: Author)

Due to these experiences associated with learning online during pandemic, academic motivation among students has deteriorated (Gustiani, 2020; Smith et al., 2021), which calls for an increase attention to examine students' motivation. It is of critical importance for students to receive appropriate intervention and learning support to augment their motivation for scholastic achievement despite the setbacks in the current online context of learning. Hence, this study aimed to determine the learning support to reinforce students' motivation during homeschool exodus. Students perceived that these academic and psychological support can serve as strategies to motivate them during online learning. The transcripts revealed the significant strategies that teachers and parents can derive from this article to create a human-centered pedagogy during online learning.

## METHODS AND DESIGN

### Design and Sampling

This study employed a conventional content analysis to determine the online learning support to reinforce students' motivation during homeschool exodus. The use of document review was also employed to interpret textual data that the students have provided in their learning modules. Most of the students have intermittent connections so the interview method was not possible in gathering the data. However, the researcher chatted some of them for follow up questions about their answers on the modules.

Participants who participated in the study included 35 college students. These students did not experience meeting their classmates and instructors face-to-face since they started at the university. They were tasked to provide the learning support that they need during their online learning through modules. They consented of the nature of this

study and volunteered to participate in the study. The participants were chosen regardless of their economic, cultural, and religious affiliations. This study made use of the data from the participants who gave their consent. Out of 132 students, only 35 students were qualified for the inclusion criteria, which was the submission of one completed module. Other students did not complete the module since it was not a requirement to do so.

### Collection of Documents

The instructor gave the modules to the students through the Telegram application. The students find the platform convenient since it requires less cost for mobile data and storage space. The participants of the study submitted their modules in the Telegram application. The module was part of the introductory topics. The students answered the lesson hook/motivation activity. They were given enough time to answer the module since the instructor needed to consider their situation. The module asked the students to provide the learning support that they need during that may help them improve their motivation for online learning during the pandemic.

### Data Analysis

The researcher applied a conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). An initial reading of transcripts was done for possible codes, which came from qualified selection of modules and based on students' consent. Subsequent coding was done based on the initial reading of module transcripts. These written transcripts were read line by line. To prevent drifting from the coding strategy, a code book helped the researcher in the analysis. The codes were sorted based on similarity of content and themes were formulated from the categories. Final step was done when researcher finalized the structure and selected themes and categories. The analysis resulted in 10 categories divided across five themes, as shown in **Figure 1**.

**Table 1.** Digital empathetic language as learning support to reinforce students' motivation

Supplement instruction through digital contingencies	S26. Providing video in replace of online lecture
	S24. Provide models or scenarios related to the topic.
	S12. Performance activities that encourage the students to recall prior knowledge
	S28. Encourage students to evaluate new information and modify prior knowledge
	S29. Encourage group work and the use of peers as resources
Use simplified & optimistic language	S1. Simplify language, repeat words and clarify meanings.
	S11. Simplified lessons for better understanding with examples from different views
	S13. Use hopeful and optimistic language
	S24. Learning with positivity and enhanced teaching strategy for better online learning
	S5. Use hopeful and optimistic language. This will help students look forward to coming back to the campus.
Build students' motivation through praise & encouragement	S1. Include praise and encouragement as part of the student's learning and teaching experience
	S12. Provide learning to students & let them enjoy process practicing competence & considering different situations in midst of pandemic
	S9. Giving words of encouragement such as positive affirmations ... This might push students to engage themselves more in learning
	S22. Motivate the students with the inspirational experiences of a teacher
	S23. Encourage the students to be socially aware

FooterWillBeHere

**Table 2.** Relational fitness to reinforce students' motivation

Establish a supportive relationship with the students	S3. Facilitating student to create a strong bond and connection with each other.
	S5. E-mail your students to remind them that you are still there for them.
	S13. Let your students know that you are there for them & that if they need help to reach out to you. Ask each of your students what they learn & how you can help them.
	S11. A reciprocal relationship between teachers & students. Teachers have duties to students and that students have duties to their teachers
Address socio-emotional needs in times of uncertainty	S4. Increasing student interaction
	S25. Socialize with friends through social media platform
	S3. We need to connect emotionally especially in times of anxiety and uncertainty, emotions are key to learning.
Strengthen familial support for academic continuity	S34. Equitable support and guidance from educators and parents for every students' physical and emotional well-being.
	S3. Open communication with my family members at home as well as my blockmates [classmates].
	S12. My parent should support me emotionally that interrelate to my studies to effectively gain learning.
	S35. Motivations and moral support of family are needed.
	S14. Nowadays support from the family is the most important that we would ever want rather than any other things.

## RESULTS

Motivation is crucial for learning especially in the realms of the new normal. The students need all the support that they may obtain from their personal and educational circles to expand their repertoire during the transition to ERE. Themes, categories, and sample excerpts were derived from the data analysis.

Teachers necessitate to make the learning possible for the students through the application of digital technology. The students articulated the value of digital assessments, meaningful learning, and inspirational experiences of their teachers to encourage them to learn (Table 1). Teachers should "encourage and motivate students that despite the difficulties of home and online based learning, instructors are ready to give support and hope to the students to continue fostering [their] skills, knowledge and competencies" (S26). To ensure that students learn from the topics, "educators may provide infographic videos and articles" (S37). Due to the Internet connection hindrances, teachers need to supplement the learning of the students such as through online assessments. However, teachers should not neglect the integration of values in discussions. In that case, pre-service teachers reiterated to design activities that will foster empathy to help the students "understand and learn from underlying situations and allow them to integrate rules that will later help them" (S36).

A strong relational support given to the students can assist them for academic continuity despite the pandemic (Table 2). One student commented of trying to brainstorm alone (S11) but still looked to the social support of peers and teachers (S5: "I need to ask help and

questions from my teachers and classmates to grow"). Evidently, teachers should communicate with their students and reach out to them to offer words of comfort given the opportunity to do so to lessen the students' psychological stress. Likewise, teachers need to address the social and emotional needs of the students for greater online classroom involvement (S19). As one student commented, giving emotional support is crucial since "emotions can help students to engage with learning longer because they are motivated" (S18).

Student 36 also added familial, spiritual, and mental support as part of the learning support to continue learning (She said: I'm losing my faith to continue this kind of system but I'm so happy to have spiritual family that are always there for me to continue and move forward.). Teachers should communicate with the parents to remind them of their children's education and request understanding of their children's situation at home (S35: "There are times that I want to give up so just a little encouragement from them well help me to continue"). Moreover, the students also call for financial learning support aside from the socio-emotional support (Table 3) (S8: "Methods of providing financial support to students such as scholarships, work study programs and etc."). Inequalities arise in the educational ecosystem when students cannot access the Internet due to financial constraints within the familial settings. Studies confirmed that economic conditions affect student learning (Castleman & Meyer, 2019; Moneva et al., 2020). In that case, it is a pivotal role of the academic community to mitigate this inequality. The university's need to arrive of financial programs to assist the students' financial needs particularly supporting their need for load allowances, mobile devices, and others to alleviate their predicaments.

**Table 3.** Financial mitigation to reinforce students' motivation

Share financial support for virtual learning	S4. Financial and emotional support from my family and friends in times uncertainties
	S30. I need financial support especially now, because our internet connection is not <b>available</b> , so my resort is to go to the store and to register my sim to have access in data
	S33. Financial support is essential. To survive amidst this COVID-19 pandemic, our mobile loads will be our bridge in learning aside from our determination to study
	S34. Family support by giving me time for me to read & answer my module also through financial assistance especially money for my load

**Table 4.** Environmental learning support to reinforce students' motivation

Uphold optimal learning though a positive learning environment	S29. Positive learning environment
	S34. A quiet comfortable place, where I cannot be distracted by unnecessary noises thus making me focused on the task given greatly
	S20. Little consideration from teachers when problem in connection arises
	S3. Simple study space at home for a comfortable study environment.

**Table 5.** Innovative educational resources to reinforce students' motivation

Provision of off-line & online educational resources	S21. Platforms for synchronous and asynchronous sessions (Zoom, Google Meet, Messenger, Telegram, Facebook, etc.)
	S16. Better communication through social media
	S13. Educational videos on YouTube or personally made educational videos
Use of conventional educational materials	S32. Films, multimedia, recorded lecture, movies, videos, and slides
	S3. Writing materials including pens, pencil, notebooks, and papers
	S7. Story Books that the students can engage with, and they can learn/ reflect from it
	S5. Self-Learning modules provided by the teachers
	S1. My own bullet journal to keep my schedule and tasks on track

Studying through synchronous and asynchronous settings present challenges for the students. As a solution, teachers would need to make EOL classroom conducive for the students (**Table 4**). The educators should make the online classroom optimistic, engaging, and interactive for the students to rid them of boredom and pandemic fatigue (S15: "I believed that a teacher should make the online learning environment as interactive, intimate, and enjoyable as possible. An interactive curriculum is more memorable to students as they were surrounded by the language of loneliness because of the threat of COVID-19"). Likewise, some students may experience the difficulties of having to study at home due to the demands of taking care of some members of the family, environmental distractions, home chores etc. These issues are confirmed from studies (Barrot et al., 2021; Kapasia et al., 2020) that these beset the home learning of the students. They desire for a "stimulating educational environment ... [to] grow and be able to meet their full potential" (S6).

Students' motivation for EOL may increase when they have technological support for their classes online (**Table 5**). Based on the analysis, students expect the utilization of online platforms and social media during this educational emergency. They added that teachers can introduce offline learning apps for those students who lack regular internet connection in some location. They also emphasized having self-learning modules, writing materials, and visual organizers to support their learning (S32: "Introducing different offline options and application;" S34: "Yellow pad and pen. This is also needed because occasionally I need to write to have some notes and to have a paper in case there are activities;" S7: "Visual aids that helps the students organize their knowledge").

## DISCUSSION

Students face technological challenges such as unreliability of the Internet connections and lack of necessary electronic devices (Cleofas & Rocha, 2021). Whilst the social and pedagogical challenges they

encounter are mainly related to the lack of human interaction between teachers and students, lack of physical spaces at home to receive lessons, lack of motivation, and lack of support of parents who are working remotely in the same spaces (Ferri et al., 2020). These samples of prevailing challenges among the students during ERE need appropriate attention and intervention. As a response to reinforce their motivation for learning, this study aimed to determine the learning support that students need during their emergency remote learning.

Analysis of the transcripts illustrated that students want teachers who are empathetic toward their individual situations. Due to multiple functions at home and inevitable distractions in their current learning arrangements (Baticulon et al., 2021), they call for understanding and use of empathetic language among teachers. In the new normal, they need educational materials that would provide insightful learning through group works, reflection tasks, or performance activities. They also call for engaging teaching strategies that would supplement their learning without sacrificing quality of content. Since the students are also dealing with voluminous learning modules that teachers require from them, they stressed for the use of simplified language in educational materials and sporadic encouragement from teachers so that they are motivated in accomplishing their learning modules and participating in virtual classes. Students value praises and encouragements especially during this time in which they are submerging in a highly complex educational setting with numerous multifunction roles and responsibilities at home. Hence, teachers should continue to use empathetic remarks and encouraging words that show they provide human-centered pedagogy and pedagogy of care towards the students (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2021).

Likewise, students emphasized the value of a supportive climate whether at home or in school. They want their teachers and family to understand their situations. To address their socio-emotional needs, the university should foster strong linkage to the family unit so that the parents will know how to assist the scholastic and psychological support

to their children. Parental support during homeschooling is valuable for home-based students (Nantwi & Boateng, 2020).

Amidst the pandemic, the connectivity between the universities and stakeholders are important more than ever to survive the adverse educational hindrances and to reinvent education in the context of the learners rather than the curriculum (Zhao, 2020). The interdependence of the teachers as supervisors and the parents as home educators is indispensable to the socio-emotional needs of the children. The undivided efforts to amplify students' motivation for learning throughout the global crisis need to thrive since "knowledge and solidarity are the key to long-term survival and flourishing of the human race" (Jandric, 2020, p. 237).

Since numerous students at the university under this study are from lower income or middle income families, they asked for financial support for ERE. Although they are all government scholars upon entering the university, and a few students have other standing scholarships, many students reiterated that they needed financial support for their virtual learning so that they can have the determination to carry on with their studies through ERE. They have to spend their allowances to access mobile data for the Internet connection for at least five hours a day for one week. It is a financial struggle for many students, so they cannot attend emergency online classes daily. Aside from that, some of their parents are also struggling economically, so they are also affected with the existing predicaments. This is similar to the study (Moneva et al., 2020) that parents' financial support is associated with the motivation of students in their school tasks, and that low income interferes with their engagement in their studies (Castleman & Meyer, 2019).

Prior to the pandemic, the students are used to the actual classroom, so they remain focused and motivated while learning. However, it is a different learning arrangement at home. Realistically, some students do not have a separate learning area for their studies. Others even have to travel in distance to secure internet connection during their virtual learning. Nevertheless, the students yearned for a positive learning space at home such as having an environment free from distractions and noises. On the other hand, a noisy and complex environment is a cause for distraction in home learning (Lischer et al., 2021), so students need to find conducive spaces for learning at home. Students can focus on their lessons and are motivated to learn despite the new normal curriculum when they are supported with a modified learning area suited for their learning needs. They learn better when their learning environmental needs are met according to their learning styles (El-Sabagh, 2021), so a consideration of psychological and physical home learning environment is valuable for them to stay engaged during ERE.

"It is high time for higher education to renew, recalibrate, and reposition itself in the educational landscape. This would require the institution of higher education to regenerate itself and be born again. Like the Phoenix (also known as: anqā, simorgh), it needs to rise from the ashes, but to do this, it must first face the flames" (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020b, p. v).

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Online learning during the pandemic has presented hindrances among students in a complex home environment. To cope with the challenges, appropriate motivation given to the students can support

their learning experiences. A provision for financial mitigation, digital empathetic language, relational fitness, environmental learning support, and innovative educational resources can motivate them during these complex emergencies. When students learn internal locus control, they are empowered to view success despite complexities. Teachers should apply the pedagogy of care and a human-centered pedagogy such as praise, encouragement, and empathy during academic exchange with students. The emotional and mental well-being of students should be a priority, especially during times of distress. External and internal motivation can drive them to academic resilience. Drawing on motivation through context-specific materials, scholarship support, positive feedback, socialization strategies, and group dynamics during online learning can encourage students to persevere academically. With reference to social and curricular implications, educational systems should ensure the future of every student to create a better post-pandemic world.

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**Declaration of interest:** The author declares no competing interest.

**Data availability:** Data generated or analyzed during this study are available from the author on request.

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