

## Exploring Students' Experiences in their Physical Activities Towards Health and Fitness (PATHFIT) Classes During Asynchronous Learning

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### **Abstract:**

When extreme heat kept students indoors and heavy rains made roads impassable, PE classes didn't stop they simply moved to bedrooms, living rooms, and backyard corners. This study explored what it was really like for students to continue their Physical Activities Towards Health and Fitness (PATHFIT) classes alone, online, and at their own pace. The participants of this research involved (PATHFIT-1) students, who took the course asynchronously. The primary instrument used in this study was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide. It focused on the specific challenges they faced, how they adapted, and whether meaningful learning still took place. A phenomenological approach was used to gather insights through interviews with ten students five male and five female who had taken PATHFIT in an asynchronous format. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns in their responses, then turning it into codes which will be formed as themes. From the analysis of students' experiences in asynchronous PATHFIT classes, a total of six themes came out: for SOP1, (1) flexibility and autonomy, (2) preference for face-to-face engagement, for SOP2, (1) barriers to effective learning, (2) inadequacy of instructional delivery for subject nature, for SOP3, (1) resilience through support and (2) intrinsic motivation. These themes demonstrated the asynchronous learning format's advantages as well as disadvantages. Some students found the lack of practical demonstrations, real-time feedback, and clear instructions difficult to understand, while others valued the flexibility to choose their own schedules and learning speeds. Their participation was further hampered by technological constraints like sharing gadgets and inadequate internet connectivity. However, by using techniques like time management, early submissions, internet research, and asking for support from friends and family, students demonstrated resilience. These observations highlight how crucial it is to create more student-centered instructional designs that take into account the particular requirements of physical education in asynchronous environments, particularly when there are disruptions due to climate change.

**Keywords:** Physical Education (PE), Asynchronous Learning, Physical Activities Towards Health and Fitness (PATHFIT), Students Experiences, Weather Disruptions, Learning Adaptation, Instructional Design, Motivation, Student Engagement.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Background of The Study

In every schoolyard, gymnasium, or open field, Physical Education (PE) has long been where movement meets learning, and where students build not just muscles but life skills. Physical Education (PE) is an essential component of holistic education, that can contribute to students' physical, mental, emotional, and social development stated by Bailey et al., (2009). Traditionally conducted in face-to-face settings, PE classes rely on real-time demonstration, feedback, and active engagement. However, with recent global and environmental disruptions, the mode of delivery has significantly evolved.

The COVID-19 outbreak marked a major shift in educational systems around the world causing an instant transition from conventional face-to-face instruction to virtual learning environments (Dhawan, 2020; Santos et al., 2022). The necessity to adhere to health regulations, which included lockdowns, physical separation, and school closures, sped up this change. Additionally, Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) highlighted that although online learning guaranteed educational continuity, it also presented a number of difficulties, such as those related to student participation, digital literacy, and technology access. Despite these challenges, the change created the framework for new learning approaches, including students were able to access resources and do assignments independently thanks to asynchronous learning, establishing a new standard for the provision of education even after the pandemic.

Hot weather recently stopped in person classes in the Philippines. According to the Department of Education (2024), schools were advised to shift to asynchronous or modular learning when the heat index reached critical levels. In person physical education classes are not safe then, this event caused schools to use online methods for PATHFIT courses. Students do physical activities, assessments along with reflections on their own; they do not have a teacher guiding them in real time.

Extreme heat, heavy rain along with floods have also disrupted face-to-face classes in the Philippines. This occurs especially during typhoon and monsoon seasons. Such weather poses safety risks for students and teachers. This results in a stop to physical classes. Schools then adopt asynchronous ways of teaching. The NDRRMC (2023), states that frequent heavy rains in recent years caused class suspensions in many provinces - this pushed schools to use distance learning choices to avoid academic delays. According to UNICEF Philippines (2025), students lost up to one month of school days due to climate-related disruptions, including floods and intense heatwaves. Asynchronous learning became a useful and quick answer. In physical education, breaks in lessons make outdoor group activities dangerous. Schools use self-paced modules and digital items to continue physical education when the weather is bad. Around the world, people studied asynchronous learning in different situations, plus the results varied.

Farrell in addition to Brunton (2020) stated that the teacher's presence and an organized module keep students involved in asynchronous learning. Yu and Jee (2020) emphasized that timely quality feedback is crucial in maintaining student engagement in online PE classes. Fitriady, Alfarizi, and Saputra (2022) emphasized the effectiveness of using self and peer assessment tools in improving movement skill evaluations in online PE classes. These international findings indicate that while asynchronous PE is feasible, it requires intentional instructional design and feedback mechanisms to be effective.

In the Philippines, Agbong and Agbong-Coates (2024) found that students often struggled with unclear instructions and reduced motivation in asynchronous PE classes, but responded positively when teachers maintained consistent communication and support. Belleza et al. (2024) reported similar findings, highlighting how students had to overcome barriers such as weak internet, limited space, and lack of equipment through creative and independent means. Hechanova et al. (2023) found that while synchronous online resilience sessions reduced depression more effectively, asynchronous interventions also produced moderate improvements in students' coping behavior and well-being.

Complementary studies support the idea that asynchronous learning can match or even exceed the effectiveness of synchronous modes when implemented well. Hung et al. (2024) found that, although both synchronous and asynchronous modalities improve learning, synchronous experiences tend to reduce cognitive load and bolster self-efficacy. Williams et al. (2020) noted that students appreciated the convenience of online PE but lacked

motivation without real-time supervision. Meanwhile, Chafouk and Marjanei (2024) found that student satisfaction in asynchronous formats closely matched that in synchronous ones, provided course materials were clear and expectations were transparent.

Despite the growing body of literature on online PE, a clear research gap remains. Most studies have focused on synchronous formats with live teacher-student interaction. There is limited exploration of asynchronous PE classes, where learning is entirely self-paced and independent. Moreover, much of the existing research is set within the pandemic context, with minimal attention to post-pandemic and environmental factors like heat-induced class suspensions.

Understanding these lived experiences is crucial, because it can direct the creation of additional interesting, inclusive, and successful asynchronous physical education training. Insights from this study may help educators and policymakers better support students' physical activity learning in alternative delivery modes especially under non-traditional and climate-driven conditions. This study therefore seeks to explore the lived experiences of PATHFIT students at Central Luzon State University who participated in asynchronous PE classes. Using a phenomenological approach, it aims to understand how students perceive their engagement, challenges, coping strategies, and learning outcomes in asynchronous PE, with the ultimate goal of informing more student-centered practices in future course design and delivery.

By hearing directly from students about their challenges and adjustments, this research hopes to give a clear picture of what it's like to study PE asynchronously. The study also aims to see if this learning method still allows students to gain the physical skills, knowledge, and habits that PE normally teaches. Knowing about these experiences is important - it helps teachers and schools improve how they teach PE classes online, especially when face-to-face sessions are not possible. Reasons for this include extreme weather or other disruptions. This research supports better teaching practices. It also helps students learn in Physical Education, even if they take classes online.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

A phenomenological research design was employed in this study to investigate what Physical Activities Towards Health and Fitness (PATHFIT) students experienced in their classes that were asynchronous. Phenomenology is a qualitative approach that seeks to understand how individuals experience a particular phenomenon from their own perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is well-suited for this study, as the goal is to gain in-depth insight into students' engagement, challenges, coping strategies, and personal reflections in a self-paced PE learning environment. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenological research allows researchers to collect detailed narratives and identify common themes across participants' experiences, making it ideal for capturing the essence of what students go through in asynchronous settings. Phenomenological research lets people gather detailed stories. It also helps to find shared ideas among what different people experience. On that account, it is good for showing what students undergo in asynchronous settings, this design puts student voices and experiences at the middle of the analysis and the meaning given to what was found.

### **Research Locale**

A study took place at State University in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The researchers picked this place to check on how students felt about online Physical Education classes during periods when they did not meet at the same time. The study focused on Physical Activities Towards Health in addition to Fitness (PATHFIT) courses for Physical Education students - it sought to grasp their views and what difficulties they faced as they used online PE materials outside of live teaching. The study helped the researchers learn different ways students used the materials that were not live, such as videos, texts along with records of their activities. It also showed how these ways affected what they learned and how they participated. The researchers also found out how well various ways of learning without live interaction worked for physical education. Some of these included doing exercises at one's own speed plus writing in a journal about thoughts and feelings. Participants did these activities from their homes or other distant spots. This also let researchers figure out if the format where students did not meet at the same time helped them recall and use the information they learned or looked over, especially in terms of

moving their bodies also staying healthy. The information for this study came from surveys and talks with students online - this offered facts about the students.

### **Participants**

The study involved Physical Activities Towards Health and Fitness 1 (Movement Competency Learning) students, who took the course asynchronously. There were total of 10 participants consisting of five males and five females, who were selected using purposive non-probability sampling. This technique was used to intentionally choose participants who had direct experience with asynchronous (PATHFIT) classes, ensuring that the data collected would be relevant to the study's objectives. The collection of data didn't stop until saturation, meaning no more new themes and insights were appearing from participant's answers. Saturation indicates that the information gathered was sufficient to fully address the research questions, and further interviews were unlikely to produce additional meaningful data.

### **Instrument**

The interview guide developed by the researchers was a semi-structured interview guide which was used to elicit focal information from students involved in the online asynchronous Physical Activities Towards Health and Fitness (PATHFIT) classes regarding their actual experiences, problems, and coping strategies. The guide contains open-ended questions that prompt individuals to share detailed and personal narratives drawn from their own experiences. The study's statement of the problem informed the organization of its contents, which was verified by academic experts for clarity, relevancy, and appropriateness. Instrument allowed researchers to collect rich descriptive data that was established in the thematic analysis.

### **Data Collection**

To collect useful information about how Physical Activities Towards Health and Fitness (PATHFIT) students manage in asynchronous PE classes, this study used interviews as its main way to get data. The interviews happened in person. The questions for the interviews centered on important topics, for example, what are the lived experience of students during asynchronous (PATHFIT); they also addressed how students learn practical and skill-based information. Another subject was the challenges they encountered. The questions also covered the coping strategies applied by students in an asynchronous learning setting. This included how they manage their time also how they deal with their feelings. They also discussed their thoughts on their physical health and how ready they feel for jobs in the future. Depending on what the people in the study wanted as well as when they could talk, the interviews happened in person or one on one interview. With the participants' permission, all interviews were voice recorded and transcribed for in-depth theme analysis, in line with the phenomenological methodology of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

The study utilized thematic analysis by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process begun by translating the interview recordings into words. After, the researchers read every response; they wanted to understand the students' experiences in their PATHFIT classes during asynchronous learning. They put important words or ideas into codes, these codes showed up as themes that revealed common experiences. These included problems, feelings along with ways to adapt to online learning. The researchers checked the themes. They accurately described what the students shared. The researchers explained each theme using simple words - they also put in quotes from students to back up the findings. During this process, the researcher tried to avoid personal bias. They focused only on what the participants said. This process helped the researchers grasp what students went through in their asynchronous PATHFIT classes.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Based on the study's statement of the problem, three topics were investigated; lived experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. In the first statement of the problem, two themes emerged which are flexibility and autonomy and preference to face to face engagement. The second statement of the problem which are the challenges or issues encountered, two themes are revealed this includes barriers to effective learning and inadequate instructional delivery for subject nature. For the third statement of the problem which is about coping strategies, there are two themes formed, resilience through support and intrinsic motivation.

## **1. Lived Experiences of Students in their Physical Activities Towards Fitness and Health during Asynchronous Learning**

Two major themes came out of the students' experiences in their online Physical Activities Towards Fitness and Health (PATHFIT) classes. They wanted in-person interaction and valued flexibility and autonomy. Many students enjoyed the freedom to choose their own times for schoolwork. They worked at their own pace, often using online materials for help. They could adjust their schedules to meet their needs. They highlighted the importance of seeing real examples, getting immediate answers, and collaborating with others in a classroom. They also reveal the challenges of learning physical education online.

### **Theme 1: Flexibility and Autonomy**

In asynchronous classes, students appreciated having control over their schedules and the ability to complete assignments at their own pace. This autonomy gave them the freedom to explore topics independently and search for clarification through accessible platforms like YouTube and TikTok. The sample responses are provided below:

"It was okay... there were instructions, but I still had to study it on my own." - P1

"If it is unclear, I search on YouTube." - P5

These responses support Knowles' (1980) andragogy theory, which emphasizes the importance of self-directed learning, especially among adult learners. However, Song and Hill (2007) argued that not all students benefit equally from such autonomy. Their study highlighted that learners who lack self-regulation skills and technological competence may experience confusion, procrastination, and reduced engagement in asynchronous environments.

### **Theme 2: Preference for Face-to-Face Engagement**

Many students preferred in-person learning for Physical Education. They valued the hands-on experience, live demonstrations, and immediate feedback that face-to-face classes provided.

"In person, I learn more." - P2

"It's hard to learn properly if no one is teaching in person." - P8

This preference supports Social Development Theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs most effectively through social interaction with teachers or peers in real-life contexts Vygotsky's (1978). However, Murtagh et al. (2023) found that online delivery of Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE), especially when grounded in constructivist pedagogy, supported by technology, and utilizing both synchronous and asynchronous methods can still promote student autonomy, peer interaction, and active learning in skill-based subjects.

## **2. Challenges encountered by Students in Asynchronous PATHFIT classes**

With the challenges encountered by the students, two major themes were revealed, barriers to effective learning and inadequate instructional delivery. They found it tough to learn and emphasized the lack of instructions. Many students had technical issues too. Their internet was slow, they couldn't always use a device, and waiting for teacher responses was long. These problems made it hard to focus and finish tasks quickly. Especially when teachers had to check their movements. Students found it hard to learn correct movements because they didn't have direct contact. This led to frustration and poor learning outcomes. These points suggest that asynchronous teaching might not be the best for classes like PATHFIT, which require skill practice and performance evaluation.

### **Theme 1: Barriers to Effective Learning**

Students encountered technical problems such as poor internet connection and low-quality devices. They also found it difficult to assess their own work because teacher feedback was not always timely. The sample responses are provided below:

"We did not have Wi Fi, plus I had to share... uploading was sometimes difficult." - P3

"A rubric was present... but sometimes no comments came back." - P7

These challenges are consistent with Adedoyin and Soykan's (2020) findings, which emphasize that technical difficulties and delayed teacher feedback can hinder student engagement and participation. However,

Nieuwoudt et al. (2024) found that while both asynchronous and synchronous methods can improve academic performance and self-efficacy, synchronous formats help reduce cognitive load and better support self-regulation. This suggests that real-time interaction can address many of the learning difficulties reported by students, indicating that purely asynchronous formats, especially without interactive features, may be insufficient.

### **Theme 2: Inadequate Instructional Delivery for Subject Nature**

A different problem appeared when Physical Education did not match how instructors delivered it. Students felt that recorded lessons and written instructions were not enough to help them learn skills. Since PATHFIT involves physical performance and interaction, many found it difficult to complete tasks correctly without in-person guidance.

"It is hard to learn properly if no one is teaching in person." - P8

"I need to see the actual form because I learn better when someone shows it physically." - P11

These aligns the findings of Martin (2023), who identified that PE teachers reported poor internet connectivity, limited real-time feedback, and absence of physical demonstration as major issues in online delivery. Teachers indicated that lack of synchronous interaction hindered student engagement and skill accuracy. However, Lee et al. (2021) conducted a randomized controlled trial comparing asynchronous video lectures with synchronous Tabata training. They found that the synchronous approach significantly improved adolescents' muscular strength, endurance, flexibility, and balance. Suggesting that live, structured online PE can still effectively support skill development when done properly.

### **3. Coping Strategies for Challenges they Face in Asynchronous PATHFIT classes**

Two major themes were formed with regards to their coping strategies, resilience through support and intrinsic motivation. They used their own drive and outside help to overcome tough parts. Many students kept going, even with loneliness and technical issues, because they cared about staying active. Support from friends and family helped them stay calm. They also learned to manage their time well. They planned their days and finished tasks early, asking for help when needed. These actions show their ability to adapt and overcome. They used their resilience, cleverness, and planning to handle the challenges of learning from a distance. This demonstrates how students managed to deal with the specific needs of online physical education.

#### **Theme 1: Resilience Through Support**

Students shared that they were able to overcome the difficulties of asynchronous PATHFIT classes through the support of family, classmates, and peers. These forms of social support helped ease emotional burdens, solve technical problems, and maintain accountability in the absence of real-time teacher presence. The sample responses are provided below:

"I felt stressed, but my family always helped me." – P9

"I did it early so I would not be late. I asked my classmates for help." – P10

According to Bandura (1997) self-efficacy theory, people will persist and succeed in a task when they are able to do the task and when their environment encourages such behaviour. Similarly, Borup et al. (2014) assessed that peer and family support is important for students' staying engaged and being emotionally regulated during their online learning journey. Li and Che (2022) pointed out that such support systems may be unavailable or limited in rural or remote areas, making it more difficult for some students to manage the demands of online learning in such areas. These differences demonstrate that while support helps many students build resilience, some students may require a more organized intervention and support from their school or institution.

#### **Theme 2: Intrinsic Motivation**

A number of students reported that it was their interest in the subject, particularly their enjoyment of physical activity that encouraged them to continue the asynchronous PE despite difficulties such as social isolation or lack of space. Even when there was no help, they remained consistent due to internal drive.

"I like this class. I still had a great time although it was challenging." – P4.

"Even if nobody was watching me, I did the workout because I want to feel stronger." -P2.



The results support the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) which pointed out that motivation that is intrinsic can be a powerful force for engaged learning when learners feel competent and autonomous. Sun and Rueda (2012) stressed that learners are more engaged when they perceive the task as meaningful and relevant. In the online PE context, not having a real-time interaction would greatly lower the motivation of students, particularly those who are more externally oriented than internally oriented (Bice et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2017). Asynchronous learning may be persistent, but a lack of intrinsic motivation may affect the student, particularly non-structured individuals.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study:

1. Two timely emerging themes from students' lived experiences on asynchronous Physical Activities Towards Fitness and Health (PATHFIT) classes are flexibility and autonomy and preference for face-to-face engagement. Students stated that they like managing their timetable by themselves and progressing at their own pace. They also use online tools like YouTube and TikTok. They were able to adapt their learning according to their daily routines, and learnings styles. At the same time, many students still want face-to-face classes. The students believe that live demonstrations, immediate feedback, and peer interaction will help them understand and perform better. The magnitude of the value from the feedback suggests that, while asynchronous learning does promote independence and can provide some flexibility, it does not offer the education that is required in subjects that require learning by doing and physical demonstration, like Physical Education.
2. The findings revealed that students encountered significant challenges in their asynchronous PATHFIT classes. The challenges cited were categorized into two major themes; the first being barriers to effective learning and the second: inadequate instructional delivery for subject nature. The lack of stable internet access, a proper device and delay/insufficient teacher feedback is affected many students. Furthermore, the way the course was designed did not fit the physical interactive nature of the subject. Hence, students found it difficult to do the movements correctly as they could not rely on written or recorded instructions alone. This indicates that asynchronous methods, especially those not accompanied by engaging tools or synchronous feedback, are unable to satisfy the requirements of skills subjects like Physical Education. A lack of regular feedback and unable to spatially present skills means the students do not learn well and the instructors also do not teach well.
3. Despite the challenges, students employed various coping strategies to continue participating in their asynchronous PE classes. Two key themes were resilience through support, and intrinsic motivation. Family members, classmates, and peers provided emotional and practical support to students. This helped them deal with stress and technical obstacles. Many stayed motivated because they enjoy physical activity and have their own goals. Many students develop a personal routine that helps them get their tasks done in time to avoid the anxiety of last-minute submissions. Coping in an asynchronous learning environment relies heavily on external support systems and internal motivation. Having access to good family or peers or being personally motivated by the subject helps certain students succeed. Others who lack institutional or instructional support may find it hard to succeed.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were drawn based on the conclusion of the study.

1. Recommendation for school administrators, it is important to provide technical and instructional support for the effective delivery of skill-based subjects like Physical Education. The organization should ensure students have stable internet access, can borrow equipment, and provides training to teachers for

successful online PE. Curriculum adjustments should also be examined to ensure the delivery mode reflects the nature of the subject.

2. Recommendation for students, they are encouraged to strengthen self-management skills and seek support when facing challenges in asynchronous learning environments. To keep engaged and motivated, students must ensure they get on a regular study schedule, communicate with their peer and/or instructor frequently and use the online resources available.
3. For future researchers, it is recommended to explore other variables such as gender, location, and internet access level to examine how these affect the online learning experiences in PE. Future researchers should compare the effectiveness of different online teaching formats. Researchers may also obtain the views of teachers for a comprehensive view of instructional challenges and strategies.

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