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Students' Experiences with Digital Fatigue in Online and Hybrid Learning

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Abstract
This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore and understand the lived experiences of college students regarding digital fatigue in online and hybrid learning environments. A total of twenty (20) college student participants from Cebu City, Philippines were selected using criterion-based purposive sampling. Data were collected through a researcher-made open-ended questionnaire and semi-structed interviews conducted online. The gathered data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework. Findings revealed that students commonly experience physical, mental, and emotional symptoms such as eye strain, headaches, mental exhaustion, decreased motivation, and difficulty concentrating. Six (6) emergent themes were identified on students' academic performance, engagement, well-being, and daily functioning. The study also revealed various coping strategies employed by students, though with varying levels of effectiveness. It is concluded that digital fatigue significantly affects students' learning experiences and overall well-being in online and hybrid settings. It is recommended that educators and institutions implement balanced instructional strategies, manageable workloads, and supportive learning environments to reduce digital fatigue and promote student well-being.

Keywords: academic engagement, college students, digital fatigue, hybrid learning, online learning, Philippines, student well-being, thematic analysis

1. Introduction

The shift to online learning has intensified students' prolonged exposure to digital devices, giving rise to what is commonly referred to as digital fatigue. Existing literature indicates that fatigue in online learning refers to the mental exhaustion, reduced focus, and disengagement students experience due to prolonged screen time and continuous virtual interactions (Silvia *et al*., 2025). However, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding of how students personally experience digital fatigue and how it specifically affects their learning processes, well-being, and academic participation in sustained online settings. Despite existing studies on digital fatigue, there is limited research that deeply examines students' lived experiences and how digital fatigue influences their learning, well-being, and participation in online and hybrid learning environments. This study aims to explore students' experiences of digital fatigue in online and hybrid learning by using a qualitative approach to better understand its impact on their learning processes and overall well-being. This study will focus on understanding how digital fatigue affects the lives of students in online and hybrid classes. By looking closely at their personal experiences, the research aims to identify the specific part of digital learning that causes the most tiredness and stress. While technology made it possible to continue education from home, it also caused many students to feel mentally and physically drained. This research is necessary because it explains how constant video meet and digital assignments lead to a loss of focus and energy (Prasetyo, 2025). By looking at these daily struggles, the research helps identify specific times when technology becomes too much to handle for a learner.

Understanding these root causes is the first step in addressing the exhaustion that many students currently face. This research provides schools and teachers with a deeper understanding of the mental health challenges students get from digital education. The findings will assist educators in recognizing the early signs of burn out, allowing them to adjust their teaching methods to be more adaptive. This study also benefits the students by advocating for a more balanced approach to online and hybrid learning environments. By knowing these personal experiences, the research serves as a foundation for creating healthier academic schedules and more sustainable digital habits. Ultimately, this work is valuable because it seeks to improve educational effectiveness while prioritizing the well-being of every student. In the international context, students have also faced challenges related to prolonged participation in online learning. Students in the United States experienced mental exhaustion and cognitive overload in video-based online classes (Bailenson, 2021) [3]. Similarly, students in China reported increased stress, fatigue, and reduced motivation during fully online learning (Cao *et al*., 2020) [9]. These findings highlight that while online and hybrid learning offer many advantages, sustained digital engagement can negatively affect students' psychological well-being and academic engagement. Understanding these experiences provides educators with insights to design more balanced and supportive online learning environments that promote both educational effectiveness and student well-being. In the Philippine context, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) issued national guidelines to support the implementation of flexible and online learning in higher education institutions. These guidelines emphasize student-centered approaches, flexibility in learning [5]delivery, and the consideration of students' well-being amid increased academic demands in digital environments (Commission on Higher Education [CHED). While online and hybrid learning ensured the continuity of education, students were also exposed to prolonged screen time, increased workload, and reduced face-to-face interaction. These learning conditions may contribute to mental exhaustion, stress, and digital fatigue among college students. Despite national efforts to promote flexible learning, concerns regarding students' mental well-being remain evident in actual learning experiences. In the National Capital Region, Philippines, according to Gumasing *et al*. (2023) [17], most academic stressors are mainly caused by academic pressure, exams and deadlines, excessive assignments, poor time management, social and interpersonal challenges, high expectations, fast curriculum pace, school-life balance, environment, and lack of mental health support. These academic pressures increase students' weariness or fatigue during online learning. Estadian *et al*. (2022) stated that many students experience sensitivity to noise, sleep problems, and irritability, which negatively affect their online learning. Noisy environments disrupt sleep and increase restlessness, which makes students more easily irritated and causes fatigue. The growing use of technology in education, combined with increasing academic demands, can affect students' physical and mental well-being. Students' experiences provide insights into both the benefits and challenges of online and hybrid learning. This study focuses on understanding students' experiences with digital fatigue in these learning environments. It examines how digital fatigue impacts their well-being, emotional health, and academic engagement. By exploring these experiences, the study aims to provide insights that can help improve online and hybrid learning practices for students.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design. It involved gathering data to provide an accurate depiction or detailed account of a phenomenon without affecting it in any manner. It sought to observe, document, and develop a comprehensive profile of the subject under investigation, frequently focusing on patterns, behaviors, or characteristics (Cornell, 2024). The descriptive qualitative design provided an in-depth explanation and analysis of the findings.

2.1. Problem formulation

This study aims to explore and understand the lived experiences of students with digital fatigue in online and hybrid learning environments. Specifically, it seeks to answer the questions:

What symptoms of digital fatigue do students experience in online and hybrid learning?

What are the impacts of digital fatigue on students' academic performance and overall well-being?

What strategies do students use to manage digital fatigue, and how effective are they?

What are the possible recommendations that can be proposed?

2.2. Data evaluation

The author evaluates the contents of the research journal obtained so that the research data to be discussed can be in accordance with what is desired.

2.3. Sampling Design, Research Respondents & Environments

The study utilized criterion-based purposive sampling, where participants were selected based on predefined criteria that align with the research focus on digital fatigue. The inclusion criteria were: (a) currently enrolled college students in Cebu City, (b) have experienced both online and hybrid learning modalities for at least one (1) academic term, and (c) are 18 to 25 years old. A total of 20 college students from diverse academic programs were selected, which is adequate for qualitative descriptive studies and allowed for sufficient depth and variation in responses. Data was collected online. All 20 participants first answered an open-ended qualitative questionnaire administered via Google Forms, with informed consent obtained digitally. A subset of these participants was then invited for follow-up semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into their experiences.

2.4. Research Instrument

This study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide as the primary instruments for data collection. The survey questionnaire was designed to measure students' experiences with digital fatigue in online and hybrid learning environments. The first part gathered the demographic profile of the respondents, including their age, gender, year level, academic program, and average daily screen time. The second part focused on students' experiences with digital fatigue and consisted of open-ended questions that allowed respondents to describe the physical, mental, and emotional effects, such as eye strain, headaches, difficulty concentrating, mental exhaustion, decreased motivation, stress, irritability, sleep disturbances, and

reduced academic engagement. In addition, a semi-structured interview guide was prepared to gather in-depth information regarding the students' lived experiences with digital fatigue. The interview questions focused on their personal experiences in online and hybrid classes, situations that contributed to digital fatigue, its effects on their learning and overall well-being, the coping strategies they used, and their suggestions for reducing digital fatigue. Follow-up and probing questions were employed to encourage participants to elaborate on their responses and provide richer data for the study.

2.5. Data Gathering Procedure

Data gathering began with securing ethical clearance from the appropriate institutional office to ensure compliance with research ethics. Once approved, the researcher conducted a qualitative descriptive study using semi-structured interviews to explore the lived experiences of college students from a public university in the Philippines who were enrolled in online or hybrid learning modalities and who had experienced digital fatigue. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through online semi-structured interviews conducted via Google Meet, and an informed consent form was provided prior to participation to ensure ethical compliance and voluntary involvement. The interview guide focused on students' personal experiences with digital fatigue, particularly its effects on engagement, well-being, and learning, and probing questions were used when necessary to allow participants to elaborate on their responses. Each interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes, and participants' responses were audio-recorded with their consent to ensure accuracy. All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis consistent with a qualitative descriptive research design. The analysis process involved systematic coding, categorization, and theme development to identify recurring patterns and shared meanings that captured the essence of students' lived experiences with digital fatigue in online and hybrid learning environments. All qualitative data were securely stored, treated with strict confidentiality, and later interpreted to generate comprehensive insights into students' experiences while ensuring adherence to ethical research standards throughout the study.

2.6. Data analysis and interpretation

The data collected in this study were analyzed using a qualitative approach to explore the lived experiences of students with digital fatigue in online and hybrid learning. All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed word-for-word to ensure that the participants' responses were accurately captured. The transcripts were then analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006) [8]. The researcher read the transcripts several times to become familiar with the data and identified important statements related to digital fatigue. Similar responses were grouped together and organized into categories, which were later developed into themes that described students' experiences, the effects of digital fatigue on their learning and well-being, and the strategies they used to cope with it. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they clearly represented the participants' perspectives. Finally, selected direct quotations from the interviews were used to support the themes and provide a deeper understanding of students' experiences in online and hybrid learning environments.

2.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained before the study was conducted. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and gave their consent through an online consent form. Participation was voluntary, and students were free to withdraw from the study at any time. The identities of the participants were kept confidential, and no personal information was collected. All survey responses and interview recordings were stored securely and were used only for research purposes. The researcher ensured that participants were treated with respect and that no harm came to them during the study.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Results

This study employed a thematic analysis to explore the experiences of college students in the context of digital fatigue within online and hybrid learning environments. Through an in-depth examination of participants' responses, recurring patterns and significant insights were identified, reflecting the multifaceted impact of prolonged digital engagement on students' well-being and academic participation. The analysis aimed to capture both the challenges encountered and the strategies adopted by students as they navigate these learning modalities. In this study, six (6) emergent themes were identified, namely: (1) learning experience and modality perception, (2) physical health effects, (3) mental, emotional, and cognitive strain, (4) engagement, participation, and academic performance, (5) behavioral engagement and participation, and (6) coping strategies and institutional support.

4. Discussions

4.1. Learning Experience and Modality Perception

Learning Experience and Modality Perception refers to how students evaluate and interpret different modes of learning, such as online, hybrid, and face-to-face, based on factors like flexibility, accessibility, engagement, and overall effectiveness (Means *et al*., 2014). These were supported by the following responses of the informants: *"As everyone* knows, I have a sickness called Takayaso's Arthritis Disease, which is TAC for short term. My overall experience with online and hybrid learning has been convenient but exhausting at some times. I appreciate the flexibility and not having to commute once in a while, especially since managing my energy is important for me." - Participant A

"So with my experience with online and hybrid learning, I can see it is difficult and challenging at the same time. Since from the start, my mindset is to really focus on face-to-face classes. But of course, I'm a quiet person, so I was able to focus on online and hybrid learning. And with that transitioning, it was very difficult and challenging. Of course, high exposure to media and digital media like cell phones and laptops." - Participant B

"I would describe my overall experience with online and hybrid learning as somewhat draining sya because of long hours sa screen and also many tasks, nya sometimes ang

deadlines overlap. Even though it's flexible but it can be tiring and a bit isolating. I would describe my overall experience with online and hybrid learning as somewhat draining because of long hours spent in front of the screen and the many tasks. Sometimes, deadlines also overlap. Even though it is flexible, it can still be tiring and a bit isolating." - Participant H

These responses indicate that students perceive online and hybrid learning as both convenient and flexible, yet simultaneously challenging, exhausting, and sometimes isolating due to prolonged screen exposure, heavy workload, and difficulty adapting to the learning setup. According to Adnan and Anwar (2020) [1], while online learning offers flexibility and accessibility, students often report difficulties such as lack of engagement, increased workload, and challenges in adapting to the new mode of learning, which negatively affects their overall learning experience. These findings show that students' experiences with online and hybrid learning are not purely positive or negative but rather mixed. While flexibility and reduced need for travel are seen as advantages, these are outweighed by challenges such as exhaustion, adaptation difficulties, and feelings of isolation. This suggests that the effectiveness of these modalities depends not only on accessibility but also on how well they support student engagement and well-being. These findings imply that schools should design learning modalities that balance flexibility with student support by managing workload, improving engagement strategies, and ensuring that students can adapt more effectively to online and hybrid environments.

4.2. Physical Health Effects

Physical Health Effects refer to the bodily discomfort and physiological symptoms experienced due to prolonged use of digital devices, including eye strain, headaches, and musculoskeletal pain associated with extended screen exposure (Sheppard & Wolffsohn, 2018). These were supported by the following responses of the informants:

"After long hours in front of the screen, I usually experience eye strain, headaches, and sometimes neck or shoulder pain. And my eyes would feel dry or irritated sometimes, especially like I'm not wearing any anti-red glasses. And sometimes I would also feel physically drained even though I haven't moved much all day." - Participant C

"So when I spent too much ahhmm too much time in front of the screen, my eyes starts to hurt and feel dry so I also experience headaches and sometimes neck and back pain because I sit for very long hours and my body feels very heavy and tired even if i'm just sitting down." - Participant F

"I sometimes feel mentally drained and overwhelmed, especially when there are many tasks and long hours of screen time. So, it is difficult to stay focused for me since I easily get distracted dri sa balay especially naa ray mo kalit ug saba and usahay pajud tawgon ta. I also feel stress because of the deadlines especially halos tanan na subjects magdungan siya. I sometimes feel mentally drained and overwhelmed, especially when there are many tasks and long hours of screen time. It is difficult for me to stay focused because I easily get distracted at home, especially when there is sudden noise or when I am being called. I also feel stressed because of deadlines, particularly when almost all subjects have them at the same time." - Participant H

The responses reveal that students frequently experience physical symptoms such as eye strain, headaches, back and neck pain, and overall body fatigue due to extended hours of screen exposure and prolonged sitting. These physical effects are often accompanied by exhaustion even without physical activity. According to Sheppard and Wolffsohn (2018), prolonged use of digital devices can lead to digital eye strain and musculoskeletal discomfort, including headaches, dry eyes, and neck and back pain, especially among individuals who spend extended periods in front of screens. These findings highlight that digital fatigue is not limited to mental strain but also has significant physical consequences. The recurring reports of eye strain, headaches, and body pain suggest that students' physical well-being is directly affected by the demands of online learning, which may further reduce their ability to concentrate and perform academically.These findings imply that educational institutions and teachers should implement measures such as scheduled breaks, reduced screen time, and promotion of proper posture and ergonomics to help minimize the physical health risks associated with prolonged online learning.

4.3. Mental, Emotional and Cognitive Strain

Students in online and hybrid learning environments experience mental, emotional, and cognitive stress due to prolonged screen exposure and increased academic demands. This includes feelings of stress, anxiety, burnout, lack of motivation, difficulty concentrating, and challenges in processing information, which affect both academic performance and overall well-being (Son *et al*., 2020). This was supported by the following responses of the informants:

"Mentally, draines and less focus. It becomes harder to absorb information and sometimes zones out even when I try to pay attention. Emotionally, I feel more irritable and overwhelmed… sometimes I just postpone it."

Participant A

"In terms of mental and emotional effects, first is stress… next is anxiety… fear of missing out… Aside from that, it's burnout… you're more tired compared to face-to-face." —

Participant B

"Mentally, I feel overwhelmed and easily distracted… sometimes foggy because it becomes harder for me to process information."

Participant C

These responses show that students experience a combination of emotional strain and cognitive difficulties in digital learning environments. Many reported feeling mentally drained, overwhelmed, and anxious, while also struggling with focus, attention, and information processing. Distractions and continuous screen exposure further contribute to reduced concentration and engagement. According to Son *et al*. (2020), students reported increased levels of stress, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating due to prolonged online engagement. Similarly, Barrot *et al*. (2021) [6] found that students in the Philippines experienced decreased motivation and emotional distress in online learning setups. In terms of cognitive challenges, Hays *et al*. (2024) [18] emphasized that effective online learning requires strong attention regulation; however, students often struggle to manage distractions in digitally saturated environments. Supporting this, *Managing Attention and Distractibility in Online Learning* (2020) highlights that learners are more prone to attention lapses due to multitasking and continuous

exposure to digital stimuli. Overall, the findings suggest that digital fatigue leads to both emotional exhaustion and cognitive overload, negatively affecting students' focus, motivation, and academic performance. This implies that educators should implement balanced workloads, structured breaks, and engaging teaching strategies to support students' mental well-being and improve learning outcomes.

4.4. Engagement, Participation and Academic Performance

Behavioral engagement and participation describe the level of active involvement students have in their learning experiences which includes activities like listening, responding to questions and completing tasks. This engagement highlights how much effort and commitment students demonstrate during both online and hybrid classes (Bond *et al*., 2020). Additionally, these different learning set-ups affect students' understanding, schoolwork, and overall achievement shedding light on whether their academic performance rises or falls as a result of their learning experiences (Bao, 2020) [4]. This was supported by the following responses of the informants: "I remember there was a time when I had several online classes and assignments on the same day. So, because of that, I felt tired from staring at the screen for hours and I struggled to understand a lesson and kind of performed poorly on an oral recitation because of being there, doing a lot of things, and just sitting on a screen all day. That's why, yeah." - Participant C

"Like I said earlier, usahay kay ma out of focus jud ka kay sa imong palibot labi na nga nag bedspace raka then naay mga borders maikog pud ta mag saba kaayo maconcious ka sa imong palibot. Sa participation kay dili gay ka makaparticipate kay pwede rasad dili makaparticipate kay pwede ra baya dili mag on cam, dili pud makita sa instructor nga ni participate baka or wala. Like I said earlier, there are times when you really lose focus because of your surroundings, especially when you're just staying in a bedspace and there are other boarders around. You also feel shy to make noise and become self-conscious about your environment. In terms of participation, you sometimes don't participate because it's easy not to—you can choose not to turn on your camera, and the instructor won't really notice whether you participated or not." - Participant E

"There was a time when nag sunod sunod amo online class and daghan kaayo jud ang task and mag dungan ang deadline. Because I am already tired from online class, akong mata kay whole day man jud among online class, so mag rush ko mag himo sa ako assignments and dili nako ma double check if sakto ba, nya dali dalion sad nako dili na ma tarong ug buhat or i-improve. And there was also a time, nag review ko for a quiz, dili na kaayo ko makatarong ug review kay lage drained na ko sa pag cgeg online class. There was a time when we had consecutive online classes and there were so many tasks, with deadlines all happening at the same time. Because I was already tired from online classes, and since we spent the whole day in front of the screen, I would rush to do my assignments and could no longer double-check if they were correct. I also ended up doing them hastily, so I could not complete or improve them properly. There was also a time when I was reviewing for a quiz, but I could no longer study properly because I was already drained from continuously attending online classes." - Participant H

The responses show that students experience reduced participation, engagement and difficulty in maintaining their academic performance in online learning settings due to factors like fatigue, difficulty concentrating and distractions in their surroundings. According to Pilotti *et al*. (2017), behavioral engagement as students' active involvement in educational activities which includes contributing to discussions and completing tasks. This implies that when students are mentally exhausted or surrounded by distractions, they tend to become less active and responsive in their learning. As stated by Bao (2020) [4], online learning conditions can affect students' academic performance, especially when learners experience reduced concentration and mental exhaustion. This suggests that prolonged screen time and multiple academic tasks make it harder for students to process information and perform well in assessments. Therefore, to enhance student engagement and improve academic performance in online and hybrid learning settings, it is to implement interactive activities, keep workloads manageable, and create supportive learning environments.

4.5. Behavioral Engagement and Participation

Students in online and hybrid learning environments experience changes in their behavioral engagement and participation due to digital fatigue, workload demands, environmental distractions, and their effects on daily functioning. Behavioral engagement refers to students' active involvement in learning activities such as listening, participating in discussions, and completing tasks, which reflects their effort and interaction in class (Bond *et al*., 2020). However, these factors often reduce students' ability to actively participate and remain focused during learning sessions. This was supported by the following responses of the informants: "My participation becomes quieter and less responsive during discussion. Concentration wise decreases and I would sometimes miss important details. It's not that I don't want to participate but my body and mind already feel exhausted so I just take naps in between the lectures, that's all. My participation becomes quieter and less responsive during discussion. Concentration wise decreases and I would sometimes miss important details. It's not that I don't want to participate but my body and mind already feel exhausted so I just take naps in between the lectures, that's all." - Participant A

"Digital fatigue makes it hard for me to concentrate because sometimes I attend class, but I am not fully listening. I also participated less because I feel tired and mentally drained so instead of actively answering, I just stay quiet. That's all. Digital fatigue makes it hard for me to concentrate because sometimes I attend class, but I am not fully listening. I also participated less because I feel tired and mentally drained so instead of actively answering, I just stay quiet. That's all."- Participant F

"I feel like in this time, it's very common for us to feel this way knowing that we are currently in an online setup. So, I usually start feeling digitally fatigued after about one or two hours, one to two hours of continuous online classes, especially if there are no breaks in between or if multiple subjects are scheduled back to back. Okay, thank you so much for telling us your symptoms. We have next set of questions about the impact of academic performance. I feel like at this time, it's very common for us to feel this way knowing that we are currently in an online setup. So, I usually start feeling digitally fatigued after about one or two hours, one to two hours of continuous online classes, especially if there are no breaks in between or if multiple subjects are

scheduled back to back. Okay, thank you so much for telling us your symptoms. We have next set of questions about the impact of academic performance."- Participant C

These responses show that students' participation is influenced not only by willingness but also by fatigue, workload pressure, and environmental conditions. As fatigue increases, students tend to lose focus, become less responsive, and sometimes disengage completely during class activities. According to Pilotti *et al*. (2017), behavioral engagement involves active participation in learning tasks; however, this decreases when students experience exhaustion, distractions, and academic pressure. Overall, the findings indicate that behavioral engagement and participation in online and hybrid learning are shaped by fatigue development, workload demands, and environmental distractions. These challenges lead to decreased interaction, reduced responsiveness, and more passive learning behaviors. This implies that educators should implement balanced workloads, provide adequate breaks, and design interactive learning activities to enhance student participation and well-being.

4.6. Coping Strategies and Institutional Support

Students in hybrid learning environments manage digital fatigue through a combination of personal coping strategies and the need for institutional and instructional support. Constructive and proactive coping mechanisms help regulate negative mental states, while supportive learning structures further enhance students' well-being and academic performance (Drelich-Zbroja *et al*., 2021; Dhawan, 2020) [14, 15]. This was supported by the following responses of the informants:

"When stress or sometimes headache comes because I don't drink my medicine if we're taking lectures because I don't like to stop listening to the teacher. I try to take my medicine as soon as the lecture is done. The medicine has the side effect of making you relaxed. It turns to make you go to sleep. As I have said before, I go to sleep. I also try to lessen using my phone. I just go outside sometimes if I feel drained, wala najud koy energy nga maminaw pa or mag gunit ug cellphone. When I feel stressed or sometimes get a headache, it's because I don't take my medicine during lectures since I don't want to stop listening to the teacher. I take my medicine as soon as the lecture is finished. The medicine has a side effect—it makes me feel relaxed and sleepy. As I mentioned before, I end up falling asleep. I also try to reduce my phone use. Sometimes, I go outside if I feel drained, like I don't have the energy to listen anymore or even hold my phone." - Participant A

"To be frank, ang ako lang ma suggest is of course ibalik sa face to face para mawala ang digital fatigue, but of course with the condition sa atong school of course dili sya ingon dali-dali. But for me naa lang shay day nga mag wellness break, no asynchronous tasks, like naay day nga no asynchronous tasks, like wala lang juy any buhaton or any student to just really limit the digital usage kay ang system is of course naay online class and naa say asynchronous task. Although naay asynchronous task pero ang asynchronous task man gud dili jud nimo ma likayan nga mogamit gihapon ka sa digital devices can also continue the digital fatigue So I think, of. Course naay wellness day lang every week para lang maingon nga wala juy projects, para promote lang nga no digital exposure for that day, way hunahunaon any assignments or any online classes to rest lang jud and para ma alleviate lang jud ang digital fatigue and also limit sa mga school works and paper work. To be frank, my main suggestion is to return to face-to-face classes to reduce digital fatigue, although I understand that it is not easy given the current situation of our school. However, I suggest having a designated wellness day where there are no asynchronous tasks or academic requirements. This means students would have a day with no schoolwork to limit digital usage, since even asynchronous tasks still require the use of devices and contribute to fatigue. A weekly wellness day without assignments or online classes would allow students to rest and recover, helping alleviate digital fatigue and reduce academic burden." - Participant B

"The suggestion that I could give to teachers is to lessen the screen-based activities and maybe include more offline tasks that students can do without gadgets. So, for example, they can give written activities, reflection notebook, or creative outputs that doesn't need to be done online. I think this would really help, kay dili pirme naka tutuk sa screen and at the same time students can rest their eyes and minds. And it would make learning feel less exhausting and more balanced. The suggestion that I could give to teachers is to lessen screen-based activities and include more offline tasks that students can do without gadgets. For example, they can assign written activities, reflection notebooks, or creative outputs that do not need to be done online. I think this would really help because students will not always be exposed to screens, allowing them to rest their eyes and minds. It would also make learning feel less exhausting and more balanced." - Participant H

These experiences show that students cope with digital fatigue by regulating their habits, such as limiting screen time, taking short breaks, engaging in outdoor or offline activities, and improving rest and health routines. At the same time, they emphasize the importance of institutional support through wellness breaks, reduced academic workload, interactive teaching strategies, and the inclusion of offline tasks to minimize prolonged screen exposure. Khamsuprom and Arin (2024) [21] found that students who apply coping strategies demonstrate lower levels of fatigue, while Inan (2025) [20] highlighted that excessive coursework increases fatigue, and effective instructional design helps reduce it. Overall, the findings suggest that managing digital fatigue requires both individual effort and institutional responsibility. While students actively practice self-regulation strategies, their effectiveness is often limited by academic demands. Therefore, educational institutions and educators should implement flexible, supportive, and student-centered approaches—such as structured breaks, balanced workloads, and varied teaching methods—to create a more sustainable learning environment and effectively mitigate digital fatigue.

5. Conclusion

The findings revealed that prolonged screen exposure, heavy workload, and environmental distractions contribute to physical discomfort, mental strain, reduced focus, and decreased academic performance. Although students use coping strategies, these are often not enough, especially during periods of high academic demand.

It is recommended that educational institutions provide structured schedules with regular breaks, balanced workloads, and improved time allocation. Teachers are encouraged to use interactive teaching strategies, flexible deadlines, and incorporate offline tasks to reduce screen exposure and support students' well-being.

6. Thank-You Note

The author would like to thank previous researchers for their contributions in conducting research on the experiences of college students with digital fatigue in online and hybrid learning. Thanks to the research results obtained by previous researchers, I and other readers can obtain complete information on the experiences of college students with digital fatigue in online and hybrid learning. This information will certainly be very useful as a basis for further research to create more balanced and supportive learning environments for students. I hope that the results of writing this article can provide a broader picture of the feasibility and response of students to digital fatigue in online and hybrid learning that has been explored.

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