



Preservice Educators' Social Adjustment in the Changing Educational Landscape

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Abstract: The changing landscape of education has caused numerous issues and difficulties in various nations' educational systems. This has significantly interrupted, forcing students and teachers to adapt to the new learning modes. Such circumstances prompted the researchers to explore how preservice educators adjusted to the current situation. A 16-item adjustment survey questionnaire was given to 1,213 preservice teachers at the Philippine Normal University to address this issue. The study included both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The results showed that, when categorized by sex, the preservice teachers' social adjustment level is moderate. On the other hand, their social adjustments focus mainly on social interaction but least on engaging in leisure activities. Further, the study also disclosed that preservice educators are gradually adjusting socially. Therefore, various university-sponsored programs should be taken into consideration to assist students in gradually adjusting so they can handle the demands and difficulties of the new circumstance.

Keywords: Educational Landscape, Preservice Educators, Social Adjustment.

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Introduction

People experience problems and challenges in almost all aspects of life. These problems may be personal, physical, natural, or social, as they have societal roots. These social problems may refer to issues or troubles that negatively affect a society's safety, freedom, harmony, and other values. These problems that caught global concern were poverty, displacement, terrorism, and the pandemic. In recent times, the health crisis has ravaged the world and put everyone around the globe in chaos. It has led to unprecedented global morbidity and mortality, with population mental health impacts recognized as a growing concern [1].

Many nations' educational impetus has also been seriously hampered by this health issue. The crisis has had a more significant effect on the educational sector and the world's social, psychological, and economic facets [2].

All educational levels have seen a move to remote learning and school closures as a result of the ongoing crisis, which has made the educational system more flexible. During this period, various strategies, including modular and blended learning

approaches, were explored; however, schools remain uncertain about the best methods to enhance accessibility and effectiveness of learning for students nationwide. This uncertainty poses a significant challenge, particularly for college students who must navigate the demands of the evolving educational landscape.

Adjustment is to fit, make suitable, adapt, arrange, modify, harmonize, or make correspondence. It is a multifaceted and intricate idea that can eventually result in a suitable match between the environment and the individual. It entails continuous learning cycles that are typically brought on by noteworthy, frequently unfavorable events [3].

Similarly, Delle Fave et al. (2023) pointed out that adjustment is a psychological term that refers to bringing an individual and their environment into harmony. This harmony is typically achieved by a person's knowledge, attitudes, and feelings regarding his or her surroundings. However, adjustment varies from student to student in the educational setting, depending on the individual's development stage; almost all new students experience an adjustment phase when enrolling at a university. Along this line, several studies have been conducted on students' adjustment [5, 6,



7, 8]. However, preservice educators' adjustment to the changing educational landscape has yet to be explored.

Besides, more research needs to be done concerning preservice educators. This research, therefore, presents a quantitative-qualitative analysis of preservice educators' social adjustments to the changing educational landscape to investigate how individuals adapt and thrive socially in the evolving educational environment.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to investigate the social challenges faced by Preservice Teachers at the Philippine Normal University System. It specifically addresses two main objectives: first, to evaluate the level of social adjustments among all participants, as well as when analyzed by sex; and second, to examine the distinct social adjustments encountered by male and female participants amidst the evolving educational landscape.

Review of Related Literature

The emphasis of this literature review is on student adjustment in the changing landscape of education. Research on adjustment is trending in the general population of college students. However, this review focuses only on students' social adjustments through the lens of local and international perspectives, highlighting students' adjustment in higher education, more specifically in teacher education.

Social Adjustment

The degree of students' adjustment to the social style of their academic life is defined as their social adjustment in higher Education. According to Shu et al. (2020), social adaptation is influenced by the university's reputation in social activities, students' participation in social groups, students' social contacts with their peers in similar social networks, and students' knowledge of their social integration. Several studies have found that institutions and students' social networks significantly impact students' adjustment, particularly for first-year students [10]. One of the reasons students claim to leave their higher education program is because of bad relationships with social communities in institutions [11].

A study conducted by Owusu-Agyeman & Mugume (2023) in a local community in Malaysia found that the best predictor of students' achievement was Academic adjustment; however, there was no significant relationship between academic achievement and student social adjustment or students' attachment to university [13]. It has been suggested that the transition to university involves a move to a larger, more impersonal structure and increased focus on achievement and assessment [14].

Methodology

Research Design

Quantitative and qualitative methods (QUAN + QUAL) were used in this investigation. According to Irvine et al. (2020), a study design that combines multiple ways is likely to produce higher-quality data and allow for the utilization of each strategy's benefits. Murry et al. (2023) assert that the mixed-methodologies design, which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative research methods, transcends the constraints of a single methodology.

This research implemented a concurrent triangulation design with greater specificity. As noted by Alexander (2020), this method enables the researcher to combine the strengths of different data types by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data and treating them with equal importance.

In the quantitative component, this study employed a validated tool to assess the degree of adaptations encountered by male and female preservice teachers regarding their social and emotional dimensions. In the qualitative component, open-ended inquiries investigated adjustments and coping mechanisms.

Furthermore, Fàbregues et al. (2020) noted that this design facilitates the researcher's ability "to directly compare and contrast quantitative statistical outcomes with qualitative insights," thereby developing credible and well-supported conclusions regarding the issue being examined.

Using the Raosoft Sampling Calculator, 1,213 randomly selected preservice educators were determined, where 337 came from PNU Manila, 260 from PNU Mindanao, 222 from PNU North Luzon, 166 from PNU South Luzon, and 228 from PNU Visayas. From each of the campuses, the researchers determined the stratum or proportion.

Instrument

The study utilized a research instrument divided into three parts. Part I gathered demographic information about participants from various campuses. Part II consisted of a 16-item survey designed to evaluate the social adaptations of preservice educators within the changing educational landscape, divided into four themes: social interactions, involvement in curricular activities, difficulties in social engagement, and social support. Respondents selected from five adjustment options: well-adjusted, adjusted, moderately adjusted, reasonably adjusted, and not adjusted. Part III featured an open-ended questionnaire exploring the social adjustments of male and female preservice educators.

Data Gathering and Analysis

The subsequent phases involve collecting and analyzing data:

Phase 1: Preparation of the Research Instrument

The research instrument's development phase concentrated on formulating 21 questions to evaluate social adjustment. To ensure validity, these items were evaluated using Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio (CVR) by a panel of nine expert jurors in education and research. Every item was categorized as critical, important but not indispensable, or non-essential, resulting in the dismissal of five items based on the feedback received. This process resulted in a revised instrument with a high validity index of 0.92. Additionally, the reliability evaluation was conducted using a pilot test with 112 education students from Northern Negros State College of Science and Technology (NONESCOST), resulting in a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.94, which demonstrates an exceptionally high degree of reliability for the instrument.

Phase 2: The Conduct of the Research Instrument to the Target Participants

The next step included crafting a communication to request approval for conducting the study. This was followed by administering and collecting the research instruments.

Phase 3 Statistical Data Analysis

The process includes structuring data for statistical examination, making use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). A range of statistical methods was used, such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Furthermore, we implemented coding and thematic analysis to assess the qualitative feedback from open-ended questions.

Results and Discussion

This study explores preservice educators' resilience and social adjustment amid the evolving educational landscape. The results highlight the challenges faced by participants regarding social adjustment, analyzed both by sex and collectively. Additionally, the study includes participants' responses to qualitative questions that outline the difficulties encountered when adapting to these changes.

Table 1: Extent of Social Adjustment of the Preservice Educators when Grouped According to Sex.

Social Adjustment	Sex	Mean	Sd	Interpretation
Social Interaction	M	3.39	1.09	MA
	F	3.34	1.08	MA
Participation in Curricular Activities	M	2.72	1.13	MA
	F	2.64	1.13	MA
Challenges in Social Engagement	M	3.05	1.05	MA
	F	3.13	0.98	MA
Social Support	M	3.22	1.05	MA
	F	3.28	0.97	MA
Overall Mean	M	3.12	0.78	MA
	F	3.13	0.72	MA

Table 1 shows the level of social adjustment of preservice educators to the challenges of the new educational setup when grouped according to sex. The research divided social adjustment levels into four categories: social interaction, involvement in curricular activities, difficulties in social engagement, and social support. Analysis revealed that despite educational challenges, males and females demonstrated moderate adjustment across these categories. Statistically, males had means of 3.39 for social interaction, 2.72 for curricular participation, 3.05 for engagement challenges, and 3.22 for social support, while females had means of 3.34, 2.64, 3.13, and 3.28, respectively. These results indicate a similar capacity for adaptation among genders in the evolving educational landscape.

The results stated in the previous statement that both males and females were moderately adjusted may be due to their flexibility and openness to change. Preservice educators have slowly migrated from traditional education to new teaching modalities. The results from the four major categories align well with the overall data, indicating that both males and females are moderately adapted, with means of 3.12 (Sd = 0.78) for males and

3.13 (Sd = 0.72) for females. However, when examining the data individually, notable discrepancies in responses emerge, particularly between males and females in certain areas.

Participating in online co-curricular activities such as quiz bees, teaching demonstrations, etc., males had moderately adapted (M = 2.59, Sd = 1.13), whereas females had slightly adjusted (M = 2.44, Sd = 1.16). Such differences may be correlated with individual differences in students' interests in extracurricular activities. The research conducted by Finnerty et al., (2021) demonstrates these distinctions, indicating that individuals with greater conscientiousness, extraversion, or emotional stability were more inclined to participate in physical exercise, whereas those who exhibited higher levels of openness to experience were more prone to activities such as journaling, playing an instrument, or singing, along with a tendency towards increased involvement in songwriting.

Most of the time, when performing tasks alone, the males moderately adjusted (M = 3.42, Sd = 1.04), while the females adapted (M = 3.66, Sd = 0.95). The variation of results between males and females may be due to the students' individual coping mechanisms and study habits, telling us about the significant differences in how they can do tasks alone. The situations posted here are related to the study of the scenarios presented here. They are connected to the topic of (Several studies that have investigated how learners' demographic backgrounds affect their performance in online learning [19]. Research studies have investigated how gender and levels of education influence the results of online learning [20]. Although the influence of gender on online learning remains a topic of discussion, the level of education is an important factor in predicting these outcomes [21]. Women could get better learning results because they were more tenacious and dedicated than men [21]. Males and females had different levels of self-control, and as a result, females saw much better outcomes in online learning [22].

Among males, collaborating with classmates and peers to accomplish online projects and tasks had moderately adjusted (M = 3.43, Sd = 0.99); on the contrary, the females had adjusted (M = 3.51, Sd = 0.96). These contrasting results can be attributed to the case of (different and unique personalities of students, contrasting results in terms of their perspectives on collaborating with other students). Furthermore, scholars concur that interaction plays a crucial role in classroom activities that deserve particular focus [23]. Nonetheless, how interaction is integrated into the course during the design phase presents a fascinating challenge. Online engagement ought to resemble an in-person meeting, as seen in the way individuals communicate face-to-face [24]. Another suggestion is to increase the degree of interactivity built on the course to compensate for the disadvantage of distance learning. It is recommended that online education be organized, executed, and assessed to reduce issues and enhance the success of learning goals [25].

The researcher decided to explore various collaborative and team-oriented learning approaches due to these challenges [26]. According to Blankstein et al. (2020), Eisenberg's research, remote instruction's collaborative assignments rank among the hardest for students to complete. The researcher determined that the positive aspects of interdependence would encourage a learning challenge to be addressed through fragmented, individual tasks, although

independent learning activities would have been easier for students to finish in displacement situations.

Regarding seeking assistance from course professors and guidance counselors through online meetings, males had moderately adjusted ($M = 2.92$, $Sd = 1.08$), while females had already adjusted ($M = 2.90$, $Sd = 1.06$). The differences in responses between males and females can be linked to the needs of most students who ask for help from their professors regarding the subject matter and seek help from guidance counselors, especially regarding their mental health. The dissimilarities are supported by research from Guenther (2023). Students who sought psychological counseling after the crisis demonstrated improved coping mechanisms and were more capable of transitioning back to daily life. In the course of the prior SARS outbreak, various countries created online counseling resources for family members and other individuals affected by the pandemic, and they developed strategies for psychological crisis interventions that helped mitigate the pandemic's impact on public health [29, 30].

When working on group projects online, males had moderately adjusted scores ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.04$), and females had adjusted scores ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.95$). The disparities in the results between sexes may be associated with the attitude and manners of students' social interaction when collaborating with other students. The research literature from Cobb (2021) supports these disparities by highlighting factors that hinder students' sense of community and value for face-to-face instruction. Therefore, the researcher introduces a pedagogical experiment that incorporates diverse collaborative, team-oriented learning strategies to engage all students, irrespective of their location.

The researcher introduces a teaching experiment that incorporates multiple collaborative and team-oriented learning approaches to involve all students, no matter where they are situated. In a mandatory seminar designed for sophomores, students are assigned a range of group tasks, such as taking notes, writing critical essays, conducting interviews, and engaging in reflective writing.

Qualitative Essay of the Preservice Educators' Social Adjustments in the Changing Educational Landscape

The qualitative findings from the preservice educators corroborate the previously identified trends from quantitative data, offering more profound insights into their adjustments amidst evolving educational demands. The study explored responses to social adjustments, which were categorized into four key themes: social interaction, attitudes toward socialization, seeking social support, and engaging in leisure activities. Every theme was thoroughly explored, bolstered by direct quotes from the respondents, which showcased their diverse experiences in navigating the difficulties presented by the evolving educational environment.

Table 2: Qualitative Responses on Social Interaction of Preservice Educators

Theme	Male		Female		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Social Interaction						
Sub-Themes						
Interacting online with classmates and teachers	128	30.62	189	40.38	317	20.07
Collaborating with peers	36	8.61	53	11.32	89	7.32
Socializing with classmates physically	8	1.91	20	4.27	28	23
Establishing acquaintances	27	6.46	33	7.051	60	4.93
Engaging social media platform	9	2.15	22	4.71	31	255
Overall Mean	208	49.75	317	67.73	525	43.17

Social Interaction

Among the four themes in the social aspects of the respondents, social interaction dominated the responses. Most female respondents have socially interacted, with the highest percentage at 67.73, followed by males, who are 49.75%. Irrespective of their sex, there is a total of 525 respondents, with the highest percentage of 43.17, compared to other themes.

The text outlines five sub-themes related to social interaction, highlighting the significance of engaging with friends, classmates, and teachers through online platforms. It notes a prevalent trend among respondents, especially males and females, who primarily utilize these online interactions to achieve their life goals, with males at 30.62% and females at 40.38%. The data indicate a strong preference for online communication, which has become integral to their socialization efforts, alongside other forms of engagement such as physical interactions and social media participation.

According to Respondent (Resp.)216," I interact with my classmates during study breaks to lessen my stress, knowing that I am not alone in this situation and befriending my classmates because it is one of the most important lessons you will learn to be able to enjoy your schooling. Group activities also help us to have deeper friendships." Enjoying schooling is always possible despite the middle of the pandemic; no boredom can set in because they find pleasure through their friends and classmates virtually.

The same situation can also be attested by Resp 105 when she said, "The social adjustment I have made towards the changing landscape of education was that I was able to meet my new classmates virtually. We were able to interact on social media platforms. Even on the group tasks or activities, we do it online, which is quite challenging sometimes because of some circumstances our members face. Being sociable is one of the greatest strengths of Resp 28, when he said, "Even in this new

normal education, I am still a sociable person. We used online platforms such as Messenger Rooms and Google Meet to communicate with each other.

On the other hand, we identified that the minor theme is physically socializing with friends and classmates, at 1.91% for males and 4.27% for females. Such a situation is evident from Resp.6, "Every week I meet with my friends in our church, which serves as my outlet after having a workload in school-related Activities," and from Resp.123," Well, with my classmates, we do not see each other much anymore, but we keep in touch. Right now, we have research; we meet for a while to talk about what we should do for our research. It is not easy because we come from faraway places.

The study's findings of Baber & Baber (2022) indicated that social connection had a positive, considerable impact on the efficacy of online learning. However, social distancing standards diminish this effect since people prioritize saving lives and lifelong learning over online socializing.

Table 3: Qualitative Responses on Attitudes for Socialization of Preservice Educators

Theme	Male		Female		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Attitudes for Socialization						
Sub-themes						
Confidence in virtual socialization	27	6.46	47	10.04	74	6.09
Connect online at all times	22	5.26	33	7.051	55	4.52
Adapting to limited interaction	10	2.39	47	10.04	57	4.9
Allotting time for socialization	59	14.11	86	18.38	145	11.92
Demonstrating a friendly attitude for virtual socialization	47	11.24	73	15.6	120	9.87
Total	165	39.46	286	61.11	451	37

Attitudes for Socialization

Among the five sub-themes under this theme, allotting time for socialization they got more responses from both sexes. 14.11% of male respondents had allotted time for socialization, and 18.38% were among females. On the contrary, sub-themes on keeping oneself connected online and adapting to limited interaction are at the bottom two regarding the number of responses, not considering their sexes; the first one got 55, and the latter got 57. When all sub-themes are combined, the theme yielded the second-highest responses, totaling 451 when all four themes are considered.

Regarding the statements above on allotting time for socialization, Resp. 29 attested to this when he said, "I balance everything. I make an organized schedule of when I should do my

tasks and when to talk and socialize with my friends and family." Additionally, Resp. 795 also supports this idea when she said, "I need to be more communicative and be available in my social media accounts because it is the only way for me to collaborate with my classmates."

In terms of adapting to limited interactions. Both respondents shared their respective experiences: Resp. 39 said, "In socializing, I did contact and mingle with my friends due to financial and poor connectivity. I tend to share with my family instead. For Resp. 554, she also said, "Aside from the academic tasks assigned to us, due to the restriction, I seldom interact with my friends and vice versa."

Comparable results were observed in the study referenced by Del Toro & Wang (2021) regarding attitudes towards socialization, which revealed that students' perspectives on distance education could reflect the effectiveness of distance learning implementation. Furthermore, engagement practices are among the key indicators of the quality of online education [34]. Interaction is crucial for fostering student achievement and happiness. Insufficient involvement is a major factor contributing to common problems in distance education, including drop-out rates and failure [35].

By incorporating elements such as the instructor, learner, and material, engagement helps bridge the physical and mental divide that arises in the distance learning experience [36]. Students' current knowledge and good learning habits are improved through interactive distance education applications, and instructors' influence over classroom management is increased [37].

Table 4: Qualitative Responses on Seeking Social Support of Preservice Educators

Themes	Male		Female		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Seeing Social Support						
Sub-themes						
Virtually seeking social support from classmates and friends	32	7.67	89	19.02	121	9.95
Physically seeking social support from real-life friends	32	7.67	36	7.69	68	5.59
Reaching out to provide and receive support	7	1.67	22	4.7	29	2.38
Total	71	17.01	147	31.41	218	17.93

Seeking Social Support

As shown in Table 4, this theme ranks third among the four themes under social adjustments, with 218 responses comprising three sub-themes, including males and females. Among the sub-themes, virtually seeking social support from classmates and friends got the highest percentage of 9.95% regardless of all sexes,

and reaching out to provide and receive support has the lowest percentage of 2.38%.

On virtually seeking social support from classmates and friends, males got 7.67% and females 19.02%. On reaching out to provide and receive support, males comprise 1.67% of the population and females 4.70%.

In support of these two sub-themes, the following were the statements made by the respondents: Resp. 384 said, "I need to make virtual friends in our class, especially if I have to ask something during the times when I was not able to join synchronous sessions, so I tend to interact with them and build closer relationships at the same time, and Resp. 513 also mentioned that " I will cooperate and communicate with my classmates whenever I have doubts about the lesson, it is not wrong to ask, what is wrong is not learning anything because of not asking. I also help others whenever I know something about their queries.

The situation is not unique, as students often lack alternative avenues for social support beyond their family, close friends, and peers. Significant social influences, such as teachers, parents, classmates, and friends, have a substantial impact on students' attitudes and behaviors towards academics. (Given its complexity, academic motivation is shaped by both personal factors and the wider social environment surrounding students [38]. Research has demonstrated that social support has a positive effect on academic motivation, and previous studies have identified connections between students' motivation levels and the support they obtain from their parents, teachers, and peers. "The processes of social interaction that contribute to the formation of individuals' behavioral patterns, social cognitions, and values" is how social support is defined [39].

Table 5: Qualitative Responses on Engaging in Leisure Activities of Preservice Educators

Theme	Male		Female		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Engaging in Leisure Activities						
Sub-themes						
Spending time for rest	4	0.96	6	1.28	10	0.82
Engaging in recreational activities	8	1.91	4	0.85	12	0.99
Total	12	2.87	10	2.13	22	1.81

Engaging in Leisure Activities

Table 5 reveals that among the four themes under social adjustments, engaging in leisure activities got the least number of responses, with a total of 22; such a result may be attributed to some restrictions being implemented by the government due to the current health crisis that our country is experiencing. Research has shown that these results hold true in structured environments, while unstructured or self-directed activities often occur in the presence of friends. It is generally recognized that recreational activities offer young people distinctive chances for social interaction and growth, enhanced well-being, and positive mental health.

Moreover, under this theme, two sub-themes were identified: spending time resting and engaging in recreational activities. On spending time to rest, a male has 0.96%, and a female has 1.28%; concerning this, some of the responses from the respondents were noted: Resp. 349 "Actually, I became quieter than before; I enjoy being by myself and giving time and rest to myself," and Resp. 637 "I always find and give time for myself, and for the people around me to avoid and lessen my anxiety, stress, and such. I also focus more on communicating with people with whom I can share what I feel and doing "me time" to find peace and meditation."

On the other hand, in terms of engaging in recreational activities, males make up 1.91%, and females make up 0.85%. These observations were reflected in the statements of some of the respondents: Resp. 352, "Sometimes I play online games with peers just to bond or celebrate a week with no work," and Resp.120, "During my free time, I go to a stress-free environment, like going to the sea and listening to the voice of nature.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The quality of teaching and learning in tertiary education, particularly in Teacher Training Institutions, has prompted preservice educators to reevaluate their learning methodologies. This adaptation is crucial as they navigate the transition to flexible delivery and remote learning, where technological integration has proven essential. The study highlights that male and female preservice educators adjust similarly, although female students often demonstrate greater resiliency. As they face the challenges posed by the evolving educational landscape, preservice educators are developing effective time management skills, fostering positive attitudes, and establishing strategies to optimize their learning experience. Additionally, the need for social interaction and emotional well-being has become apparent, motivating them to seek support and engage in recreational activities. The findings suggest that universities should implement initiatives to facilitate this adjustment process for students, enabling them to better cope with the dynamic demands of education.

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