Students' Views from Webinars: A Qualitative Study

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

This research study aimed to describe the lessons which students learned from joining webinars. This utilized qualitative- narrative analysis methodology and involved six informants through purposive sampling based on inclusion criteria. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions using semi-structured interviews and written reflection based on Gibb's reflective model were employed to gather data. The data were transcribed, analyzed, compared, and rigidly categorized into different themes to provide a backbone of the narratives. Lessons that students learned from joining webinars were 1. Simple, yet deep descriptions, 2. Humble, yet genuine feelings, 3. Objective, yet, heartfelt evaluation, 4. Patchy, yet holistic analysis, 5. Innovative, yet personal conclusions, and, 6. Firm, yet purposeful actions. The findings of this study have significant implications on social studies teachers, curriculum planners, and school policymakers in considering the importance of webinars in teaching and learning in the new normal.

1. Introduction

The COVID 19 pandemic forced educational institutions to adopt new modes of instructional delivery. Therefore, webinars became one of the popular educational tools in learning and sharing knowledge. In line with this, the teaching of Social Studies as well integrated the use of webinars for students to learn relevant knowledge and lifelong skills at the comfort of their homes.

Adhikari (2020) supports that webinars can be successfully used in lieu of traditional events in all spheres ranging from education to business and corporate training. However, there were debates that webinars could potentially kill live events as they were deemed convenient for attendees (Roberts, 2008). As the absence of literature about the lessons which students learn in joining webinars remains scarce, considering researches like this that integrate technology in teaching social studies if not considered, may in one way or another be deemed a major setback for improving instructional delivery.

This research topic aimed to describe the lessons which students learned from joining webinars. Information results of this study may help instructional leaders in integrating the webinars in relation to the teaching and learning of students.

2. Methodology

This qualitative-narrative analysis describes the lessons which students learned from joining webinars. In utilizing a semi-structured question following the six stages of Graham Gibb's reflective model, students learned lessons about descriptions, feelings, analysis, evaluation, conclusions, and actions in joining webinars. Webinars elicited access to their thoughts and to the way they make sense and interpret their experiences (Jones, Brown, Holloway, 2013 in Domingo, 2014) in a cultural context (Domingo, 2014).

With a set of inclusion criteria, six Social Studies students, as informants were chosen through purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or selective sampling (Domingo, 2014). Ethical considerations were highly considered to meet utmost

confidentiality and protections of the informants declaring approved letter of information, waiver, and consent form. Moreover, a set of inclusion criteria was considered in the selection process.

The in-depth interview, focus group discussion, critical analysis of literature and studies, field notes, memo, and diagrams were employed. Emails, smartphones, computers, audio-video recording, and reflection paper were utilized. The data gathered were transcribed, analyzed, compared, and interpreted using Wolcott's (1994 in Domingo, 2014) "Transforming qualitative data" reducing data by organizing, familiarizing, categorizing, coding. Eventually, the data were organized into themes that formed the narratives.

3. Results and Discussion
To describe the lessons which students learned from webinars, six important themes were: 1. *Simple, yet Deep Descriptions;* 2. *Humble, yet Genuine Feelings;* 3. *Objective, yet Heartfelt Evaluation; 4. Patchy, yet Holistic Analysis; 5. Innovative, yet Personal Conclusions, and 6. Firm, yet Purposeful Action.*

3.1 Simple, yet Deep Descriptions.
Webinars are seminars that are performed on the World Wide Web. They can be meetings, conferences, demonstrations, training or teaching, or events that are designed to give information either one-way or interactively (White, 2019). Like Eric says:

> *".... a webinar was conducted via zoom..."*

Zoom Cloud Meetings, commonly shortened to Zoom, is a proprietary video teleconferencing software program developed by Zoom Video Communications (zoom.us., 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a major increase in the use of Zoom for remote work, distance education (Abbott, 2020), and online social relations (Lorenz, Griffith,& Isaac, 2020). This increase led the Zoom being the 5th most downloaded mobile app worldwide in 2020 at 477 million downloads (Forbes, 2021). Relating to the rising popularity of Zoom, online activities were organized in which John Paul, and JR call as:

> *"...a research conference", "... an online symposium", and "...an international webinar"*

The activities mentioned by John Paul and JR were made possible through Zoom which at the start of the COVID 19 pandemic, has been used by banks, schools (Das, 2021), universities, and government agencies around the world (Sabbagh, 2020). However, Trixia pointed out the educational purposes of those activities triggered by the present setup. She tells:

> *"With the current situation in our country, it is for the sake of the learners as classes are limited and in some point restricted."*

In line with the idea of Trixia, Khelly emphasized the importance of webinars by saying that those activities were:

> *"...highly substantial in these times of difficulties and they are illustrating the underplayed realities"*

In general, internet-based learning is considered an option, an alternative to traditional learning (Abou El-Seoud et.al, 2014). During the COVID 19 pandemic, it became an essential element for maintaining the activity of schools and universities. With this, students can learn anytime and anywhere, thereby developing new skills in the process leading to life-long learning (Dhawan, 2020). Trixia shared about the value-laden aims of webinars. She says that those webinars:

> "*...establish resiliency and raise awareness*."

On the other hand, Khelly provided good insights as she further supported the idea of Trixia. Webinars for her:

> "*...lay a solid foundation of solidarity and compassion*" and "*...shape the culture, beliefs, and perspectives of people*".

Lastly, Loryiel ended by saying that webinars:

> "*promote peace.*"

3.2 Humble, yet Genuine Feelings.
The increasing popularity of information and communication technology (ICT) encourages the wide use of technologies in training, with the goal of enhancing the teaching and learning quality (Xuan et.al, 2021). In this case, webinars were helpful for students in learning interesting topics. Loryiel confirms:

> *"...the topics were all interesting."*

To clarify the idea of Loryiel, other student leaders mentioned unique topics of webinars they attended. John Paul shared his academic interest by saying:

> *"I have seen and heard the different innovative research ideas of the many authors across South East Asia."*

On the other hand, Trixia highlighted her hope among the youth joining the webinar. She tells:

> *"I felt inspired with the youths coming from all around the globe making the best out of our world."*

As JR shared the same sentiments with that of Trixia, he reveals that:

> *"...webinars were interesting since there were audiences from different nations that participated."*

Furthermore, Eric confirmed the ideas of youth involvement in webinars like Trixia and JR. He tells:

> *"I feel glad that there were a lot of students who participated during the talk."*

The ideas of Trixia, JR, and Eric may be related to Terrayo (2012) in saying "The youth is the hope of the motherland." This is just one of the idioms that our Philippines national hero Dr. Jose Rizal enunciated. In the context of this present study, the youth are the students. As students who were empowered, they equipped themselves with the knowledge that webinars provide to eventually help in reshaping the future.

With the presence of different participants in webinars, Khelly exemplified "unity in diversity" with her statement saying:

> *"The webinar alluded to a strong moment of unity and camaraderie. Despite these differences, nothing would be more satisfying than that."*

Therefore, each one was challenged to take the lead as articulated by John Paul. He says:

> *"I have felt that as a youth, I am so much empowered to be the agent of change and it ignited my burning passion in advocating peace."*

Webinars having interesting topics triggered multiple reactions. Students' feelings were evoked for different reasons. However, all of them shared common outlooks toward webinars. Like Eric sharing his mixed emotions:

> *"I was quite excited that a talk like this was conducted. However, I was distressed that I was not accepted to join via zoom."*

JR spoke on behalf of students who were challenged by the COVID 19-pandemic. His statement presented issues in which webinars can help address. It was very remarkable for a student to tell about his faith by saying:

> *"It was an answered prayer because we have been dealing with mental health issues since the start of online classes."*

The word "prayer" mentioned by JR exemplifies Ephesian 4:29 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" as stipulated in the Holy Bible (2011). Therefore, as a student, it is expected for him to be positive and encouraging like others.

Moreover, Loryiel shared the same condition that JR posited. Loryiel comments:

> *"I felt at ease knowing that they are concerned with the student's mental state."*

In closing, Khelly was hopeful about how webinars can effect change. Without hesitations, she tells that webinar:

> *"...captivated by everyone's desire for change, my heart is truly overwhelmed".*

3.3 Objective, yet Heartfelt Evaluation.

The most obvious advantage of webinars is the high degree of flexibility they grant to participants. Webinars can be accessed ubiquitously via computer devices at students' homes or in other locations (Alnabelsi et al., 2015; Gegenfurtner et al.,

2017; Tseng et al., 2019). However, Internet connectivity is the root of the dilemma of slow and costly Internet connections (Salac & Kim, 2016). In line with the contention presented by Salac and Kim, Trixia relates to this problem, yet remained positive on learning. She speaks:

> *"My internet connection was the only problem I have. However, the webinar had ignited my fighting spirit, especially in this situation. That never stopped me from learning from the webinar.*"

Trixia was just one of the many students who **struggled for reliable internet access (Wong, 2020).** However, other students who have stable internet connections were challenged by the schedule of webinars. John Paul commended the success of the webinar by sharing:

> *"The program went well, but it should consider the time difference from other nations."*

On the other hand, while Khelly emphasized the quality of topics presented in international webinars, she also shared the same sentiments with John Paul on the issue of time difference. Khelly reiterates:

> "*Time differences were however a constraint, yet the topics were laden with thought-provoking details which really awakened my senses."*

After John Paul and Khelly realized that they attended a free international webinar, both of them settled for their experiences as participants. However, John Paul's reflective mind quickly gave an honest evaluation accompanied by a valuable suggestion. John Paul candidly comments:

> "*To assess, it would be more accessible if they have a separate time of streaming for different time zones, but it is very relevant to present fresh ideas.*"

The preceding statements shared by students showed their skills in evaluating their experiences. Those statements may have suggested bad experiences, however fostered evaluation and transferred knowledge in their personal context (Strampel and Oliver, 2007 in Antonio, 2020). In line with this, webinars elaborated its effectiveness in higher education and professional training under various circumstances (Nelson, 2010; Stout et al., 2012; Nicklen et al., 2016; Goe et al., 2018; Gegenfurtner et al., 2019c). To prove, students evaluated the importance of joining webinars. Loryiel elaborates that webinars:

> *"...are very timely, since we are in the middle of a global health crisis. People are reminded to promote care and advocate peace."*

JR pointed out the effects of webinars on other people and also mentioned the concept of caring in relation to Loryiel's idea. JR retells:

> "*It is inspiring to see some people around the globe that showed care despite the situation.*"

Eric spoke about good experiences on behalf of other people. He summarized the context about the global crisis in which Loryiel shared and JR's idea on how webinars inspired people in saying:

> *"We were able to understand thoroughly the realities of the situation."*

Looking closely at the ideas of different students, their explicit evaluation of the webinars provided specific details of their reflective thinking. John Paul enumerated the good elements of the webinar in saying:

> "*The topic, speaker, and platform are suitable in these trying times.*"

Even though Eric observed technical glitches, but he shared the same sentiments with John Paul regarding resource persons. Eric started by saying:

> "*Good thing is, we had very good resource persons. On the other hand, viewing via FB live was late."*

In closing, Eric ended with his evaluation of the webinar by saying:

> *"Overall, the experience was overwhelming because there were many insights that were shared all throughout the discussion."*

3.4 Patchy, yet Holistic Analysis

Students manifested the way in how they analyzed their experiences in joining webinars. Their analytical skills were shown in the way on how they broke down their experiences into simple parts. With this, they realized different realities behind their participation in webinars hosted by international organizations. JR tells:

> *"I find it time-consuming to listen to a five-hour talk, especially when it is late in the evening."*

The same sentiment was shared by Eric regarding the inconvenience he experienced like JR. He relates:

> *"The only inconvenience was the fact that it was held late at night here in the Philippines."*

The idea presented by JR and Eric was not about the time difference that was emphasized in the previous discussion. The issue that they laid down was about the inconvenience in the language of Eric and further qualified by JR—time-consuming. The experience of JR in attending a five-hour webinar was contrary to the idea of Abraham (2020) because the optimal duration of a webinar is between 30-45 minutes, and anything above an hour, is better divided into two episodes.

Despite, the experiences the inconvenience that webinars brought, Trixia shared her realizations by saying:

> *"I have realized how important it is to maintain good mental health for it can greatly impact our well-being."*

Webinars are the new mania when it comes to lead generation. Although webinars certainly offer more flexibility, ease of access, and convenience, they lack human interaction. While audio-visual interaction is great, physical interaction is something that has long been associated with learning- 'a pat on the back', 'high fives', etc. (Abraham, 2020). Khelly may have candidly anchored her analysis in joining webinars in the ideas of Abraham. Khelly cites:

> *"Fragmentation, expression, coping and internalization- these were the words that remained prevailing in my mind after the webinar."*

Aside from the inconvenience, compassion for others was deduced by the student in joining webinars. Thus, webinar organizers took action to help. John Paul who wanted to improve his research skills sought an opportunity to join a free-research conference. He tells:

> *"This conference gave researchers the chance to present their social and cultural studies which Southeast Asian communities benefitted from."*

On the other hand, Loryiel presented an environmental issue that is far different from John Paul's context. She also analyzed the benefits that people can get from taking care of the environment by mentioning specific concepts like atmosphere, planet, Earth to emphasize her point by saying:

> *"Having the heart to care for others and for the planet would help us save our atmosphere. it will help us sustain lives on Earth and learning all these will make us value our lives, our planet, and our home."*

Khelly out rightly articulated the message of compassion brought by webinars. If put into action by participants, other people would truly benefit. She concludes:

> *"Fueling ourselves with ample dose of compassion won't cause us any harm, hence radiating it to those who are much in need will be undeniably indelible."*

Webinars paved the way for students to utilize their past experiences to form new knowledge. Because they repetitively used the term-realized, in their statements, this may suggest that they applied their previous experiences in making sense of their present experiences in joining webinars. Trixia starts:

> "*As I realized that it's not yet too late for a change.*

Furthermore, she further spoke in her context as an education student. She relates:

> *"With this, I had realized our role as pre-service teacher son creating better space for culture, social and political development"*

Eric's analysis of the benefits of joining webinars discreetly affirmed the ideas of Trixia. On the other hand, Eric may have meticulously traced the connection of the webinar's theme on peace promotion to his own context. He emphasizes that webinars:

"…has taught me of the importance of being able to understand the importance of promoting peace inside the classroom and in the community."

Lastly, Loryiel showed her new knowledge by focusing on how on finding solutions by saying:

"Having the awareness on problems, each of us is challenged to come up with a solution to help us nourish all the lives."

3.5 Innovative, yet Personal Conclusions

Student conveyed their own learning in joining webinars through innovative, yet personal conclusions. Their learnings went beyond the topics of the webinars when they shared their own stories. Khelly exemplifies:

"May each one of us initiate unfolding of stories that those will not remain untold."

Reflecting on the line of Khelly *"…each one of us initiates unfolding of stories"* may have served as John Paul's springboard in relating his thoughts about the youth regarding the concept of peace. John Paul clarifies:

"The voice of the youth is important as it has created lasting peace for the next years to come. It is in our minds and hearts where peace begins."

Those personal conclusions shared by Khelly and John Paul were probably inspired by the resource speakers of the webinars. As different webinars involved high caliber resource persons, JR concluded by saying:

"I want to be like them who managed to involve themselves in serving the local and global communities."

With those above-mentioned ideas shared by three students, their insights inferred active engagement in the webinars. Their experiences may have triggered them to underscore innovative conclusions as they were well-engaged listeners on webinars' live presentations and interactive multimedia which made the distance feel less (Mittal, 2020) of a hurdle. (Mittal, 2020)

Moreover, students also concluded through values clarification. Being hopeful was highlighted by Trixia after hearing resource persons from webinars. She tells:

"My hope for humanity has been restored after hearing different testimonies and life-changing."

Kindness was emphasized by Loryiel in concluding her learnings in joining webinars. Loryiel says:

"*This webinar reminded me to always be kind, to show care, and to foster peace.*"

Peace, hope, and kindness may just be three of the many positive values that Loryiel and Trixia deduced from joining webinars. However, Trixia was clear on how values when clarified will be useful in understanding the diverse culture of people. She concludes:

"I learned about the importance of understanding the diversity of culture. Through this, we could all end up caring for each other despite our differences."

The innovative conclusions of Loryiel and Trixia suggested an important 21st-century innovation skill (Lai and Viering, 2012 in Antonio, 2020). Students were indeed creative and innovative. Being pre-service teachers and students may infer that their creativity and innovativeness will be helpful in improving the education sector in the future. In line with webinars, JR, further proved by saying:

"Overall, the online talk was a big help to the entire educational sector."

JR being supported by Khelly cited the significance of webinars for learning. She also emphasized the value of mental wellness to highlight the context of the new mode of instructional delivery during the COVID 19 pandemic. Khelly expounds:

"After all, learning should continue to thrive, yet mental wellness is something that should not be compromised."

Furthermore, John Paul saw the value of maintaining mental wellness in preparation for the new normal, specifically relating to the higher education sector. He relates:

"Therefore, mental health is important in preparing to the shift in limited face to face soon Higher education institutions."

Loryiel as a college student discreetly inferred about her struggles in coping with the academic demands. However, she managed distance learning by realizing:

"As a student myself, I came to realize that there's no need to exhaust myself to limits in order to comply."

3.6 Firm, yet Purposeful Actions

In the preceding discussions, students pointed the inconveniences they experienced in joining webinars. However, Eric suggested his plan when opportunities of joining webinars come. Eric candidly tells:

> *"Next time, I'd come early as scheduled so that I could secure a slot in the webinar."*

Despite the many inconveniences encountered, John Paul was showing excitement on another webinar participation. He told his desire of promoting webinars to other people. John Paul comments:

> *"If there are sessions like this, I will try to attend and promote the webinar. It is worth sharing especially if the situation permits."*

Khelly elaborated her notion on the need of translating compassion to action. This may suggest community service which may have been inspired by her learnings in joining different webinars. She tells her vision by saying:

> *"As a global community may we set aside all our differences, and let our inner forms of goodness flourish in a way that lifts up the least, last, and lost individuals of our society, and that entails taking that compassion into action."*

Loryiel supported the idea of Khelly in applying her learning into action. Her idea of valuing her experiences in joining webinars may be observed according to the quality of actions she will do. Loryiel was trying to contain her happiness by saying:

> *"The learnings will be applied and the experience will be treasured."*

In relation to Loryiel's emphasis about her experiences to be treasured, Eric articulated his plan in participating in different webinars and specified his topics of interest. Eric replies:

> *"Next time, I would love to attend activities which tackle about world perspective and goals."*

Considering that the evolution and use of systems and technologies favored the development and expansion of educational opportunities (2016) play support to the different plans of actions that the aforementioned students have. In the context of the crisis generated by the pandemic, the hierarchy of reasons students may be reluctant to learn through online platforms has changed (Claudiu et.al, 2020). Therefore, their motivation kept them to learn by joining webinars, like what the students testified in this study.

In relation to students' actions, the succeeding statements provided a good background on step-by-step actions from joining webinars. John Paul in his statement may suggest cooperation with his use of the word together. What was likely on his mind may be the involvement of everyone in a peace-building culture. John Paul shares:

> *"Together, we can build the nation of peace through relevant webinars."*

JR may not have spoken about peace like John Paul. However, he underscored the compassion to care in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic. JR tells.

> *"Overall, the pandemic may restrict our mobility, but never our compassion to care for our fellows."*

Loryiel supported JR's concept of care for others and John Paul's emphasis on peace. Being hopeful may be Loryiel's strong characteristic as a student. Was she entertaining doing charity work? She says:

> *"My faith in humanity was restored. It won't hurt if we do humanitarian activities. We should be bearers of peace. I would dare to care."*

Khelly emphasized change. At the back of her mind, she may be challenged to apply her important learnings from her experiences in joining webinars. She candidly tells:

> *"Some experiences may seem trifling, once valued by many, will spark off massive   changes."*

As a student, Eric reiterated the value of webinars. He was reminded to be well-informed of the different social issues. Eric emphasizes:

"I have learned that as a student, we have social obligations to understand pressing issues present in our society."

Lastly, Khelly shared her thought-provoking action by saying:

"A mind nourished with abundant information, a heart enclosed with passion and compassion, and a mindset of transforming knowledge into action- all of these gain strong dominion in me."

4. Conclusion

Webinars are a convenient and flexible tool for teaching and learning. Though, webinars have advantages and disadvantages, when used to the fullest, can promote a culture of reflection to further advance the cause of producing holistic students. As the use of technology is inevitable nowadays, the educational landscape will continue to evolve while teachers and students learn to be adaptive to the different modes of instructional delivery. In practice, embracing webinars to be an alternative and supplemental source of knowledge and skills will make teaching and learning more effective, entertaining, and worthwhile. In theory, virtual-social learning will eventually surface and becomes a part of everyone's consciousness.

Therefore, may Social studies teachers, curriculum planners, and school policymakers, consider partnerships, training, research dissemination, technology utilization, inclusion in the education curricula, and community outreach activities as platforms in integrating webinars and technology as a whole towards revitalizing the teaching and learning in the new normal. Furthermore, researches that are similar to this is highly encouraged and also be funded towards discovering new approaches and cutting-edge strategies to contribute to the academic debates on teaching and learning.

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