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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Positive and Negative Lessons from Hidden Curriculum at a Philippine State University

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Background/purpose – Little attention is placed upon the lesser-known form of academic curriculum–that is, the hidden curriculum–and most especially in the Philippine context. This study explored the positive and negative lessons from hidden curricula in the higher education context, with a Philippine state university as the research setting.

Materials/methods – This study was formed as a qualitative case study, with data obtained using online focused interviews and focus group discussions with college students. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results – For the positive lessons, college students implicitly showed evidence of being compassionate. They also acquired behaviors and attitudes considered healthy to the development of their personality. With many participants reportedly helping each other, they also appeared to learn collaborative working. For the negative lessons, college teachers were noted to trigger academic discord, and reportedly lacked empathy towards their students' circumstances. Toxic behavior, collective cheating, and high-pressure work environment were also observed.

Conclusion – Where groups of people study, such as in the university setting, hidden curricula will always exist, as in the social environment always manifests a certain hidden curriculum. Hidden curricula can offer both positive and negative lessons which, observed or not, can impact upon students as well as other stakeholders. Furthermore, the development of hidden curricula can be an iterative phenomenon by first influencing the collective, and the collective then influencing the hidden curricula, ad infinitum.

Keywords – Hidden curriculum, college students, implicit learning, academic procrastination, collective cheating, personal development

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1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional curricula once represented a technical process of learning that set the bar for education to be continually moving forward and expanding, as a foundation paving the way for change and innovation. However, as time moves, people naturally seek ways to ease the process of learning. The progressive view embraces that change often leads to improved opportunities for curriculum to develop and prosper, to keep getting better, for new ways to be found that redefines the once constant culture of education.

As new technologies continue to innovate, educational institutions are in a perpetual race to keep up with the ever-changing demands of the 21st century. This, in turn, has allowed the masses to conceive notions that are largely focused on the context of curriculum. Curriculum is broadly defined as a blueprint for achieving objectives within a school setting (Egan, 2014). When talking about this aspect, the first idea that comes to mind for many people concerns the explicit curriculum which, as the term itself suggests, pertains to something that can be grasped explicitly. However, little attention is paid to a lesser-known form of curricula, that is, the hidden curriculum.

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in influencing the behavior of their students. As such, students' behaviors can be shaped, changed, and affected by the behavioral patterns to which they are exposed. In essence, hidden curriculum is derived from implicit learning, which is generally observed when people discover the structure of the situations in which they are immersed. It is therefore the learning of various information that is acquired incidentally, without awareness of what is being learned (Seger, 1994).

Tracing its historical roots, the term hidden curriculum is understood to have first originated in Jackson's *Life in Classrooms*, in which he explained that some things taught were not to be found in books (Jackson, 1968). Later, Miller and Seller (1985) refined hidden curriculum as a varied range of unspoken or unstated values, behaviors, procedures, and norms that constantly exist in several areas of the educational setting. While such expectations are not explicitly planned, written, or taught in any standard class procedure, hidden curriculum can be described as the undisclosed lessons, principles, and perspectives that students learn during their time at their educational institutions.

The concept of hidden curriculum is based on the understanding that students learn various lessons in school, and that these may or may not relate to their formal course of study (Raissi-Ahvan et al., 2021). Hence, the influence of schools is not limited to what is stipulated in their textbooks and other educational material. Given that schools are inherently social institutions (Çubukçu, 2011), the acquisition of various beliefs, norms, and even skills that are not intentionally taught or introduced can be said to be inevitable. As such, hidden curriculum encompasses a variety of potential intellectual, social, cultural, and environmental factors which may in turn lead to several issues (Alsubaie, 2015). These issues can be caused through informal co-occurring assumptions and expectations present within the learning environment (Alsubaie, 2015).

Numerous studies have been conducted regarding hidden curricula according to international literature. For example, Giroux and Penna (1979) stated that the potential effect of system evaluation –which focuses on recognizing what is taught and evaluated both academically and non-academically– ensures that the nature of hidden curriculum is not clearly revealed. Hafferty and Franks (1994) stated that socialization and exposure to hidden curriculum start even before students formally enter school; however, the goals and substance of formally offered courses may often be at odds with hidden curriculum. Lastly,

Margolis et al. (2001) mentioned that even though goals may differ, the traditions of hidden curriculum are still much the same; with education a tool for stratification and differentiation that holds secrets about certain valuable cultural features.

Studies about hidden curriculum in the Philippine setting are relatively few in the field of education. For example, Gunio and Fajardo (2018) published a study that evaluated the impact of hidden curriculum on the character development of preschool pupils. Porlares and Tan (2021), in their study, presented a notion that hidden curriculum not only reflects on student performance and their learning process, but also impacts on the difficulties faced by teachers and other involved stakeholders. Meanwhile, Ortega et al. (2022) revealed that, in terms of hidden curriculum, there is an outgrowth of both positive and negative elements in the new normal learning set-up.

Research problem. As stated, studies about hidden curriculum in the Philippine setting have been scarce. One possible implication of this is that hidden curriculum is a commonly neglected component of curricula given its implicit nature, and the absence of concrete methods to understand and analyze the phenomena (Gunio, 2021). Some specific attempts have been made to analyze hidden curriculum within certain institutions; however, with an unestablished methodology, the task is significantly difficult (Tekian, 2009).

Despite the issues entailed, it is important that any hidden curriculum is revealed and exposed in educational institutions since they possess a cogent influence not only on their students, but also on other stakeholder members of the institution. Therefore, the current study's overarching aim is to explore the positive and negative lessons from hidden curricula in the higher education context based on a state university in the Philippines.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research design. The current study used a qualitative approach to explore the hidden curriculum at the participant university. As a tradition of inquiry, we utilized a qualitative case study in this research, with a focus on obtaining information exclusively from the participant university, although this may limit the scope to others. According to Yin (2013), a case study strives for inductive reasoning to discover the unexplored occurrence. Therefore, in venturing this needs to come with an interplay between the interviewers and interviewees engaged in step-by-step guidelines to conduct and attain coherency and a workable relationship in forming a mechanism to determine the design components (Maxwell, 2012). We considered qualitative case study to be appropriate since it addresses the complexity of the phenomenon under study and does not reduce insights to misleading simplicity. The limitation of a qualitative case study, however, is that it cannot be generalized to other contexts or populations.

Participants. The study involved a total of 36 participants, with 23 females and 13 males. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22 years old, with an average of 19.72 years. The following inclusion criteria were applied: (1) aged 18 years or above; (2) able to read and write; (3) able to use both the English and Filipino language; (4) attended as a student of the participant university; and (5) voluntarily agreed to participate in the interview and consented to the interview being recorded. In addition, the following exclusion criteria were applied: (1) aged below 18 years old; (2) not attending the participant state university as a student; (3) felt obliged to participate; (4) with compensation. Open-ended questions were used in both the focused interviews (FI) and focus group discussions (FGD). Each session was recorded after having gained the participants' consent. In accordance with the Data Privacy Act (Republic Act

11073), data privacy was assured. In the same vein, pseudonyms were used in reporting the findings so as to ensure the confidentiality of the participants.

Data generation. We generated qualitative data by conducting focused interviews and focus group discussions using the Google Meet and Zoom online platforms. A focused interview is an approach employed to discover participants' responses in a way that can be analyzed by researchers (Merton & Kendall, 1946), whilst the focus group discussion is a method used by researchers to mutually question a group of participants (Merton et al., 1990). Following these two techniques, we explored the phenomenon of hidden curriculum at the participant university. Employing these two approaches enabled us to clarify the participants' responses (Johnson et al., 2020). No time limit was imposed in conducting the data generation, instead, we adhered to the principle of data saturation. Moreover, we utilized convenience sampling to select participants who were readily accessible (Etikan et al., 2016). The study was made possible through the cooperation of our colleagues. The data collection was performed during April and May of 2022.

Data analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to make sense of the collected data, which is a commonly used technique for the analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of data in the realm of social sciences (Terry et al., 2017). Thematic analysis is a step-by-step process that generates results from qualitative data, hence it was considered appropriate for the current study. Alhojailan (2012) also mentioned that the method was the most suited approach for studies seeking to discover findings based on interpretation. Many social science researchers have employed this method in their data analysis. For example, Poola et al. (2021) utilized thematic analysis to uncover the hidden curriculum that affected their participants' professional identity. Similarly, Anis et al. (2018) employed thematic analysis to identify the challenges faced by their participants in achieving quality education.

In the current study, we followed the six steps of thematic analysis as presented by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, we familiarized ourselves with the data to gain an overall understanding. Then we developed codes and looked at potential themes before analyzing them. Next, theme names and descriptions were conceived, before presenting the findings as a final step.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After collecting the participants' responses, we used thematic analysis to interpret and analyze the collected data. In total, seven themes emerged, with three positive and four negative. For the positive lessons, the analysis revealed compassion, personality development, and collaboration, whilst the negative lessons were college teachers' misbehavior, social deviance, procrastination, and pressure.

Table 1. Positive and Negative Lessons from Hidden Curriculum

Theme	Subthemes
POSITIVE	
Compassion	• Empathy • Understanding • Harmonious relationship
Personality development	• Responsibility • Communication • Risk-taking

Theme	Subthemes
Collaboration	● Solidarity ● Healthy competition ● Connection
NEGATIVE	
College teachers' misbehavior	● Insensitivity ● Inconsistency
Social deviance	● Toxic behavior ● Backstabbing ● Collective cheating
Procrastination	● College teachers' inconsideration ● *Bahala na* mentality ● Workplace procrastination
Pressure	● Unrealistic standards and expectations ● Self-doubt ● Institutional pressure

Theme 1: Compassion

This theme pertains to the compassion of people within the university that students implicitly learned. According to Strauss et al. (2016), compassion is defined as awareness toward others' misery as it becomes an impetus for them to be personally affected, making them conduct an action to provide support. The participant college students were not deliberately taught how to be compassionate by their teachers, peers, classmates, or others at the university, but rather they just personally observed, experienced, and learned about being compassionate.

Empathy. The ability to "wear the shoes of others" was apparent in the participants' responses. Forming an in-depth relationship with others –through observation and understanding, awareness, and intrapersonal reflection– is considered essential for the growth of individuals (Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017). Hence, adopting this trait enables oneself to possess a much deeper understanding of others to respond more carefully and appropriately to a scenario, which is considered imperative to ensure that participants are sufficiently competent to provide careful reflection in the future.

> *When I met him* [a professor] *the second time around... he made me realize that when it comes to learning or trying to study, you don't compare how fast you've learned with others…. I learned and realized that because of this professor.* (Heart, 21)

Mascaro et al. (2020) revealed that compassion can sometimes lead to negative implications such as emphatic distress, which refers to an experience that causes unsettled feelings when empathizing with others (Eva, 2017). Therefore, having a feeling of understanding toward something and being affected by it may not always be good, as it may sometimes produce negative results. However, the responses from the current study's participants showed that instead of feeling anxious or overwhelmed by their peers, through compassion they became motivated and inspired to keep going.

> *...Because if one does it, why can't I? Also, the assurance of camaraderie or reciprocity... like if one can do something, all of us can, without pulling others downward, but rather pulling each other up.* (Dickens, 21)

> *…It's setting aside our pride and competition to help others or our classmates. It's like reverse crab-mentality. In our section, we always help each other…, because we want to all graduate without leaving anyone behind…. It's setting aside competition for the sake of others….* (Shakespeare, 21)

Understanding. Being able to assess and respond carefully with understanding to a certain situation was also evident from the participants' responses. Since the college teachers and others at the university each understood their own personal struggles, they learned to practice understanding and it therefore became a reason for them to possess such a trait.

> *During my first year my aunt was sick and I needed to take care of her…. But, when I told him* [college teacher] *about my situation, he was open-minded and allowed me to submit a task beyond the deadline….Then, I learned to emulate that, also. I am currently leading an action research and one of our team had a problem, but I learned how to be considerate towards her.* (Bronte, 19)

Murphy-Shigematsu (2018) claimed that without compassion, people have no essence in life even though they may be successful professionals. Therefore, being compassionate toward others is indispensable if we are to seek to better our life. Being able to feel the feelings of others and having the drive to lend a hand is human nature and helps lead us to live a more meaningful life. Murphy-Shigematsu (2018) continued that the ability to connect with others, accompanied by having the capacity to understand, helps us to discover our identity, as well as meaning in life and connection to the world. Overall, this can help us to better understand the path we are venturing towards global responsibility.

> *The positive influence I learned from my teachers is that they allow us to explore ourselves or our youth. I learned also to be humble, to take our time in everything we do. They constantly remind us [of] our purpose in taking this course…. They are always reminding us it is always for the people.* (Alcott, 19)

Estrada et al. (2021) showed that, in order to build a socially sustainable organization, it is important to hone future professionals who are compassionate. It is also necessary for teachers to be compassionate because they serve as role models to their students. A simple yet kind gesture of a teacher contributes to the knowledge of their students, as such a gesture can help students learn the value of being compassionate. They learn to be kind and mindful of the suffering of others (Pommier et al., 2020).

Harmonious relationships. Compassion can lead to harmonious relationships with others. This was reflected through the participants' responses, which showed that they had learned and adopted such a trait. With the aid of compassion received from other individuals, they had learned how to form friendly and healthy relationships with others at the university.

> *The positive influence contributed by my classmates and other people at the university is being friendly, [for] they helped me to gain strong determination and on how to develop a healthy relationship with others.* (Woolf, 19)

Learning compassion is also relevant to having a positive outlook in life, especially amid the challenges people currently face. Nalipay and Alfonso (2018) found that students who possess compassion not only for others but also for themselves, despite their failures and shortcomings, are more likely to have a better perspective towards achieving goals in life.

Therefore, compassion not only encompasses others, but also includes one's personal relevance.

While the college students' responses reflected that having compassion had not been explicitly taught to them, they had learned compassion through observation and from personal experiences displayed by their teachers, peers, and others at the university. The students perceived compassion as a positive and important human attribute and, since they were surrounded by compassionate people, they also wanted to do the same.

Theme 2: Personal Development

This theme is about the personal development lessons which the participants learned whilst at university, though not taught explicitly. Personal development, from the term itself, pertains to improving oneself or one's personality. Though the term can encompass a variety of lessons and activities, personal development in the context of the current study focuses on responsibility, communication, and risk-taking.

Responsibility. Many of the participants learned the value of responsibility during their time at the university. Waddock and Bodwell (2004) described responsibility as acknowledging accountability or assuming blame for one's actions and conduct. It is about an individual having commitment to the tasks they are assigned and being accountable for any consequences associated with those tasks. Responsibility is an important virtue that needs to be cultivated, and not only by students but by everyone to accomplish their assigned tasks and to fulfill their duties properly. By and large, responsibility is not explicitly taught at university in the way that grammar is discussed. The participants in the current study came to understand and learn the importance of responsibility through the actions of their surroundings. While some emulated their college teachers in terms of taking on responsibility, others claimed that they were taught how to become responsible forcefully.

> *…I recall last semester there being a professor who I was afraid of because he was assigning us numerous activities and tasks. I realized that it was not good for me to keep thinking negatively or just complain, so I decided to become more responsible and diligent in my tasks. I learned how to organize my schedule, become mindful of my time, and apply time-boxing in my tasks.* (Woolf, 19)

University students are not treated like schoolchildren. The participant university sets high expectations through the persona of strict college teachers, working hectic schedules and with tight deadlines. This was seen to act as an impetus for many of the participants to become responsible themselves. They learned to be punctual in classes, to finish their academic tasks, and to study independently; due in part to the known consequences should they become reckless in their studies. These life skills are of crucial importance, not only at university but also outside of the educational environment. Hence, learning responsibility at university can be considered an advantage in life. Without taking on responsibility, students may be more likely to receive only low grades or worse, maybe even being expelled.

> *Professors are responsible for following the schedule. Because of that, I also learned to be responsible myself by strictly following our own schedule and not being late. Because of their* [the professors] *good behavior, it feels like they are also teaching it to us even though they are not saying anything directly to us or advising us…* (Christie, 20)

Communication. Another attribute that the participants learned at university was to be communicative. Communication is one of the 21st-century skills needed in both education and in the workplace. Ahmad (2016) affirmed that communication is significant for relationships in society and for the transformation of thoughts and humanity. In education, if a student fails to communicate their ideas, it can have a detrimental effect on their academic performance. The same logic applies in the workplace; if an employee does not know how to communicate their concerns to the higher authorities, this can lead to inefficiency or even expulsion from the organization. Therefore, communication must be cultivated for a person to succeed.

A sizable portion of the participants relayed that, they learned to become communicative at the university, and that was due mostly to their surroundings, e.g., from their peers and classmates. They described themselves as "reticent," "shy," and "introverted." Hence, they were not used to participating openly in discussions. Prior to university life, they were generally satisfied with just listening passively; however, they explained that things changed because they saw how communication became increasingly crucial for them to succeed at university. They observed that people were speaking with more confidence, asserting their beliefs, and sharing their ideas. While some utilized observation to learn how to communicate well, others tried experimentation and asked for help from their peers.

> *My classmates taught me how to express myself better. I am the type of person who's not very good at expressing myself. I've always considered myself to be a reserved type of person since I don't talk that much and often keep my opinions to myself. But I have recently become more open and expressive of my thoughts. I have enabled myself to be open to many new things as well as to allow my voice to be heard and to reach out to others...* (Maurier, 19)

Risk-taking. Some of the participants revealed having learned about risk-taking at university. Tulloch and Lupton (2003) defined risk-taking as an "activity in which individuals engage, are perceived by them to be in some sense risky but is undertaken deliberately and from choice" (pp. 10-11). Though not part of the formal curriculum, the student participants went outside of their shell and left their comfort zone, with some joining extracurricular clubs, whilst others pursued tasks that were new to them. They did that because they wanted to make more of themselves. Risk-taking is a necessary skill to progress at school as well as in day-to-day life, since if a person just stays within a comfortable arena without exerting any effort to move into the unknown, even though it may help to improve them, their capacity to grow will be less. Willingness to take risks, even though failure may occur, can help people to realize their potential (Gage, 2012).

Though the participants did not feel overly confident or well equipped, they joined organizations, spoke in front of others, and started to take on bold projects. Despite their fears and anxiety, they acted because of aspirations they sought to attain, and as a result they learned more, met new people, and improved their skills. If they had just wished but not acted, no change would likely have occurred.

> *Despite my lack of journalistic experience, I eventually learned the ropes to run our college publication…and even with my introverted nature, I was able to express myself with competence, and even gain commendations from my peers and mentors whenever I give a presentation….All these things happened because I dared myself and because I*

> *saw others doing so too. The chief lesson here is that it is essential to put yourself out there, and to face the world head-on in order to progress and succeed in life.* (Twain, 21)

Overall, the development of personal attributes is learned, even in the absence of direct instruction from college teachers. Students learn attitudes and behaviors that develop their personality from interactions and from others within the university environment. Particularly, college students can learn values like responsibility, communication, and risk-taking, despite their not being explicitly taught as part of the curriculum. This process can be described as a manifestation of positive influence; that an external force can affect individuals.

Theme 3: Collaboration

This theme refers to how college students can implicitly learn the value of collaboration in their academic work through experience and observation. According to Martinez-Moyano's (2006) definition, collaboration is the process of multiple individuals working together towards accomplishing a task or achieving a common objective. In life, it is natural to encounter countless perspectives, ideas, and opinions from those around you; hence, it is appropriate that one learns how to deal with them.

Collaboration requires the ability to work together and to express ideas well with others. According to Johnson (2013), collaboration improves students' self-management, leading to increased academic achievement. While many college teachers work to instill the value of collaboration in the classroom, a significant number of the current study's participants mentioned that they acquired the value of collaboration mainly from the actions of their fellow classmates.

> *The positive influence that I adopted from my classmates is teamwork…at all times; we help each other not only with the activities but also with personal matters too. I learned companionship even though my friends did not teach me to communicate with them, to establish good relationships with them naturally.* (Dickinson, 19)

Solidarity. A sizeable percentage of the participants revealed the presence of solidarity at the university. Solidarity is defined in the Merriam-Webster (n.d.) dictionary as "the awareness of shared interests…creating a psychological sense of unity of groups or classes." Solidarity is an important characteristic that must be present in any collaborative undertaking, else group members would each go in their respective directions and the group would unlikely achieve its goal. The participant college students shared that, through solidarity, they were able to overcome the challenges they faced at university. They felt united as a group, which led to their working properly together.

> *...A sense of solidarity plays a crucial role in overcoming the myriad of challenges in college life. Also, I found that it improved my holistic college experience, particularly when working with my fellow students...* (Thoreau, 21)

Through solidarity, activities became more meaningful for college students. This also helps them to establish networks in college life, and to provide them with a vivid experience. They described that since college itself tends to be an overwhelming experience, they needed a sense of solidarity to meet and overcome the challenges they faced. Solidarity helped them to understand that, though there are varied group members and tasks, all of them together work towards the same group goal. Through this, the college students felt a sense of belonging and trust in that others would be alongside them during the midst of their

hardships. Solidarity is the key to effective collaboration, which is a prerequisite to almost every successful undertaking in life.

Healthy competition. Some of the participants claimed that they learned about healthy competition whilst at the university. By healthy competition, they referred to viewing their student peers not as enemies, but as people who could inspire and challenge them. Healthy competition is an important variable in collaboration since it helps to inspire people to do their best and to deal with others. Furthermore, the participants also claimed that, through healthy competition, they learned to cope with the fear of admitting that they needed help. In addition, healthy competition not only helped in developing the students' self-discipline and ethics, but also encouraged them to develop new abilities and approaches and to better themselves.

> *From the people I interact with on campus, I learned to view my classmates as competitors. They are people that I know who can challenge me to become better, but at the same time, they are the ones who I can depend and rely on…* (Camus, 20)

The participants claimed that shifting from toxic competition to healthy competition within the educational setting helped them to flourish as students. Unhealthy competition focuses on the importance of winning, whilst healthy competition encompasses the necessity for student teamwork and positive active participation. Zhang and Lee (2020) emphasized that healthy competition stimulates productivity and progress among students, motivating them to aspire for better learning and development.

Connection. Generally, the participants learned the importance of connection at university, especially in terms of collaborative working with their peers. Connection explores the idea that people are interrelated with one another. As these students unconsciously tried to fit in to society, particularly whilst at university, they naturally adapted to the environment and tried to develop themselves into either a better or similar shape to those around them. Through this, they felt a connection with others around them.

> *I was able to connect with some of the alumni who helped us in the event, but also, I was able to learn new things in the journalism area…* (Twain, 21)

However, collaboration cannot start without connection. Even the mentioned subthemes would not be born without the value of connection. The participant college students felt a sense of belonging after establishing connections with one another and the feeling of being part of a family at the university. These connections are what makes students unconsciously acquire the hidden curriculum from other people.

Overall, the college students learned the value of collaboration from the people that surrounded them, and mostly from their fellow students. They observed that collaboration should have certain characteristics such as solidarity, healthy competition, and connection. Furthermore, hidden curriculum played two parts in this context. First, the college students acquired collaboration through firsthand experience and observation. Second, they were able to conform to the requirements of their university due to collaboration which, according to Markus (1978), is highly influential on the behavior of individuals.

Theme 4: College Teachers' Misbehavior

This theme reports on the participants' experience of the apparent misbehavior exhibited by some of their college teachers. A lack of consistency and sensitivity can cause college

students to feel demotivated and to experience various negative feelings. College students' engagement is shown to be adversely affected by misbehaviors displayed by their college teachers. It is therefore vital to acknowledge that such behaviors can hinder students from fully achieving the value of self-expression. Any ill-mannered remarks or negative behaviors exhibited by their college teachers can debilitate the meaningful learning experiences of their students.

Insensitivity. The majority of the participants pinpointed offensive remarks and behaviors of college teachers to the extent that they already crossed personal boundaries, manifesting as insensitivity. Offensive behaviors of college teachers are marked by verbal aggressiveness, insults, and hurtful messages (Vallade & Myers, 2014), which reportedly reduces students' motivation and enthusiasm to communicate with their teachers (Goodboy et al., 2010). Hence, the insensitivity of college teachers can lead to emotional distance and instill disapproval in their students.

> *What I've observed negatively from my teachers is…how they become too strict with us….The way in which they give feedback or respond to our questions is kind of insensitive. It makes us feel that we are not sufficiently competent to understand the lessons and the feelings we experience when they give feedback lingers. That's the reason why sometimes we are afraid to ask questions. Instead of helping us, it feels like we are being scolded.* (Hemingway, 20)

Because of the insensitive remarks of college teachers, students can avoid asking questions and express their authentic feelings. They can experience fear that their college teachers would just scold or humiliate them. This demonstrates a lack of psychological safety within the participant university. Furthermore, this unmannered treatment can result in a loss of students' appetite to appreciate learning. In turn, students will lose their sense of fulfillment in what they do. As such fears become imprinted in their mind, students will be less open, leading to their increased non-participation in class discussions.

> *This year, during our online classes, I asked questions to an instructor and she responded angrily. I also sent an important message to her, but unfortunately she didn't reply to it. Therefore, I decided to approach another professor to ask for help instead, but to no avail.* (Hurston, 19)

Inconsistency. Based on the participants' responses, the college teachers were found to be inconsistent in following their own rules and in the giving of deserving positive remarks to their students. All of this reportedly lessens the motivation of students and leads to general student ineffectiveness (Goodboy, 2011). Another point worth noting was that the misbehavior of college teachers was even specifically mentioned by the study's participants:

> *Last semester, I had a professor who I did not like at all. I was the class president at that time, and I did not like him because of the way he treated us. He said he'd be fair and on time with everything, but that's not what we experienced. For instance, during our second semester, some classmates were on the brink of not being able to enroll because he did not encode their grades on time. As class president, I attempted to contact him through various platforms, but to no avail….I was so angry at him because no matter how much I tried to communicate with him, he wouldn't respond.* (Orwell, 21)

Many of the college teachers were reported by the students as being late in giving out grades, though they insisted that the students should not be late in submitting their assigned

tasks. Plus, whilst the college teachers promised to attend to the needs of their students, the students reported having experienced neglect and unfair treatment. This shows a disconnect between what some of the college teachers said and what they did, and made their students question their teachers' integrity. The participant students understood that such inconsistency does not set a good example; hence, they shared feelings of frustration, irritation, and even anger about the situation.

> *I observed some rules that, instead of empowering us, kept us from fully expressing ourselves. Plus, some rules can easily be broken by them* [teachers]*, whilst not by us. For example, we can't submit our work late, but they can seemingly give us our grades late. Then, we're forbidden to talk using derogatory statements, but they're allowed. That's not fair!* (Morrison, 20)

Overall, the participant college students observed misbehavior by their teachers, and mentioned having experienced negative effects as a result. While college teachers commonly tell their students to behave well, it was found that some also exemplified insensitive behavior, which is ironic since teachers are supposed to be approachable and empathetic (Hattie & Yates, 2014). Moreover, the inconsistency among their college teachers raised the notion that they were not faithful to their own words, or proverbially, "not walking the talk." As a consequence, college students avoided asking questions, lost their motivation, and even held strong negative opinions about their college teachers.

Theme 5: Social Deviance

This theme deals with social deviance, particularly in terms of that which the participants learned implicitly in academia. Social deviance refers to actions or behaviors that violate social norms, something that has occurred for as long as societies and norms have existed in human history (Aftab & Rashed, 2020). Social norms can be explicit or implicit, formal, or informal, and violations of these norms can range anywhere from serious legal crimes to benign violations of etiquette (Goode, 2015). Through official and informal social control, all civilizations have devised mechanisms to manage social deviance. Philosophers, sociologists, ethicists, and criminologists, amongst others, have paid close attention to how societies wield their authority to maintain control (Goode, 2015). However, despite such safeguarding, many social deviances continue to persist in society, and that also includes within universities and colleges.

Toxic behavior. Many participants conveyed having experienced toxic behavior amongst their own social and student peer groups, their college teachers, and the university culture. Such experiences, according to the social interactions they mentioned, are "toxic" to students' health and well-being in that it causes them distress and other adverse effects. Moreover, there is an apparent tendency for students to emulate toxic behavior as they seem to believe that it is standard practice or even an informally accepted mechanism of coping with the social hindrances manifested in academia. This clearly aligns with Cornejo's (2020) assertion that to manage stress. In this case, one that is rooted in toxic experiences within the university, students can engage in maladaptive behaviors or implement alternative coping mechanisms.

Several participants also noted a similar instance regarding the culture of competition within any given university. This ranges from the classroom to academic and non-academic organizations and their respective activities. Albeit pressure and competition are of course

acceptable to a certain extent for progress to occur, there are times wherein the limit to where this is still generally considered "healthy" for scholarly and personal pursuits is only vaguely inferred. Consequently, this also gives rise to the perilous effects of schooling and even organizational politics in that students may inevitably start to behave as a collective. This may also have positive and/or negative implications with the latter leading to a tendency to resort to groupthink, which Hartzell (2022) described as the phenomenon in which a group reaches suboptimal or ineffective decisions to achieve consensus.

Groupthink is said to inhibit individual creativity and independent thinking among group members. The potential damage this may cause to the entire group, as a collective body of thought and behavior, can be significant, particularly in the context of subgroups within academia. For instance, it could ruin someone's personal or professional reputation, whilst professional working relationships are also at risk, among others. This can apply to the most minute subsections, such as cliques and smaller non-academic clubs, right up to a larger scale example such as the reputation and brand value of any given organization or affiliate of the university, even the university itself. Wilde (20) observed an aggressive culture of competition within the university, citing instances of political smear campaigns during student council elections. Although he claimed not to participate in such culture, its manifestation within the academe can be nonetheless toxic.

> *I witnessed some of my classmates become bullies and being sarcastic; they seem to have forgotten how to respect one another because they tend to judge everyone and talk behind their back.* (Woolf, 19)

> *About the toxic culture, more specifically the cancel culture that is present in our state university…the amount of stories I've heard about people making up things to fit their own narrative, but at the cost of someone's reputation, is too much and very widespread. Because of this, some students are more likely to practice such behaviors and are subject to repeating the same and cancel out people as well, because it is what they observe from those that they hang around with…* (Poe, 19)

Backstabbing. Correspondingly, many of the participant students claimed to have observed backstabbing, also known as "talking behind one's back," as another common toxic behavior. While perhaps rarely intentional, it can become a norm within the classroom as well as the wider university. Such behavior is considered toxic and socially deviant because it can detrimentally affect the victims of backstabbing incidents due to the resultant toll on their reputation, well-being, and general lifestyle. Furthermore, it also contradicts the perpetrator's conscience in that they become accustomed to morally-erroneous behavior, emulating them and believing it to be acceptable when it is not. Whilst some of the students stated that they do not engage in such egregious behavior, they expressed concern that such a status quo could exist within the university.

> *The negative influence I noticed from my classmates is speaking behind the professor's back. Because of frustrations with classwork, it has also become an avenue for venting.* (Shelley, 19)

> *I notice that many of my classmates talk behind our professor's back. There have been instances where I also have taken part because my classmates do it. I feel inspired to do that since my classmates do the same thing; however, in my case, as a student, I also know my boundaries.* (Christie, 20)

Collective cheating. Some of the participants reported a prevalence of collective cheating. Pulfrey et al. (2018) argued that students, in certain situations, develop positive attitudes and tendencies to engage in and justify collective cheating, as opposed to individual cheating, due to perceived group loyalty and a desire to improve the general status of the collective. Essentially, it is a form of cheating executed with and for peers.

> *On the idea that my classmates and I are not enemies in the classroom, we all deal with the same challenges; hence despite its 'immorality,' we 'helped' each other when needed, and it was certainly needed during quizzes, for instance. I understand that there is inherent competition, but one cannot deny the innate need to help one another in any sense.* (Thoreau, 21)

> *I notice that, because of online classes, we somehow began to collectively tolerate cheating practices.* (Shelley, 19)

In conclusion, toxicity, backstabbing, and collective cheating were the most common socially-deviant behaviors exhibited by the participant college students. This suggests that such acts of social deviance appear somewhat embedded within the collective consciousness. Therefore, a considerable number of the population displays adequate understanding and awareness of this type of behavior, albeit not extrinsically apparent.

Theme 6: Procrastination

This theme talks about the experiences of the college students' view of procrastination within the academic setting. Klingsieck (2013) defined procrastination as the unnecessary postponement of tasks or actions that one intends to do. Procrastination itself is not a form of erratic impairment but a deeply ingrained pattern of behavior. However, studies have shown that approximately 95% of college students engage in procrastination to some degree, that approximately 70% consider themselves to be procrastinators, and around 50% state that they procrastinate in a consistent and problematic manner (Steel, 2007). Whilst engaging in procrastination has been a common longstanding human tendency, it is worth noting that idling and cramming at the expense of doing school work for too long harbors potentially negative consequences for students, and that this is much more evident even within an online setting (Hong et al., 2021).

College teachers' inconsideration. A few of the participants shared that one of the primary reasons for students to engage in procrastination is due to their college teachers' inconsideration. While proof of some faculty members' inconsideration remains undisclosed, one research study suggested that college teachers' inconsideration begins with incivility between the faculty members themselves and a general lack of university materials which can result in conflict-inducing attitudes that negatively affect students' educational and psychological outcomes (Ali et al., 2019). Woolf (19) stated that procrastination can occur when students are given "overwhelming and excessive tasks" by their college teachers. She also expressed that their college teachers' insensitivity hinders class performance since they seemingly "do not consider the consequences of their actions":

> *....Some teachers are insensitive to their students' feelings. Some teachers nowadays push or try to forcefully motivate their students to strive and become competitive in the classroom, but there are times that they do not consider the consequences of their actions, and especially when a student's performance isn't improving. Sometimes, there are teachers that give advice and comment on their students' performance and, believe*

> *it or not, there are a few that seem unable to avoid using hurtful language which makes them insensitive. Since they are insensitive, there was also an instance where I also adopted that behavioral style too. Due to the overwhelming and excessive tasks that our teacher produces or makes us do, it demotivates me and causes me to procrastinate…* (Woolf, 19)

Shakespeare (21) stated a similar response: "some teachers are inconsiderate." Thus, making her "lose motivation multiple times." Due to the multitude of tasks assigned by "inconsiderable" college teachers, the students initially feel unmotivated, followed by an uneasy feeling of neglecting their assigned tasks by delaying them unnecessarily or putting them off until the very last minute, or even pushing them past the stipulated deadline.

Bahala na mentality. One factor which falls under the notion of general academic procrastination is the attitude of "come what may," better known as, in the Philippine context, the "bahala na" mentality –an expression of a fatalistic attitude towards something or as a determined event in a challenging situation where things are risky and uncertain. The "bahala na" is often expressed by Filipino students before taking on difficult undertakings such as exams, reports or just barely making various decisions (Agustin, 2020). Furthermore, Blume (20) cemented the negative presence of the "bahala na" habit within the academic culture when she stated; "*The bahala na habit succumbs me. I do activities hastily at the last minute without checking them. I know it is not efficient and it will not produce good results."*

Blume (20) believed that not all academic work can be accounted for or passed to fate or God. The "bahala na" has been a controversial trait that affects everyone across every demographic. While "bahala na" can presuppose positivity with some form of reinforcement of effort and responsibility, it can also be seen as negativity if neglected (Gripaldo, 2005).

Workplace procrastination. Lastly, while the participant students were mostly perceived to harbor some form of procrastination or laziness trait, the same could also be said for their faculty. In a study conducted by Nguyen et al. (2013), approximately 25% of adults considered procrastination to be one of their defining personality traits. In this sense, when college teachers have a tendency to procrastinate or fail to meet their own deadlines, it becomes a reflection for their students to reenact upon. However, such consequences can also occur due to revolving factors such as the administrators of the institution, for example:

> *I had this professor who would just read things off a PowerPoint presentation, and then she'd give us an abundance of tasks to do. It was an ugly sight as she did not put in any effort. It made me think, though negative, that I might as well be like that when I'm gonna teach in the future. The effect is that students won't be able to learn unless they self-study.* (Bronte, 19)

It is worth noting that the term "academic procrastination" can be occasionally used to describe those who work in the academe. However, the term "academic procrastination" in this context is debatable, because while both students and the professionals who instruct them work within the academe, they do so in different capacities, and it is generally more accurate to categorize procrastination in academic professionals as "workplace procrastination" (Laybourne et al., 2019).

Theme 7: Pressure

This theme reveals the different kinds of pressure that the participant college students experienced. These negatively affected them in varied ways such as impacting their self-esteem, brought about by the imposition of unrealistic standards and expectations by their college teachers and others. Three subthemes are classified as unrealistic standards and expectations (pressure to prove oneself), self-doubt (due to pressure), and institutional pressure.

Unrealistic standards and expectations. Many of the participants shared that their university instills unrealistic standards and expectations. By that, the students referred to instances whereby tasks and activities were assigned to them that went beyond their capacities to the extent that they were unable to handle them at all. As a result, the students become stressed and panicky, which can lead to disturbed sleep and incapacity to focus, and therefore they may achieve lower than expected grades. According to Giray (2022), schools should advance the implementation of the "Maslow over Bloom" principle, meaning that ahead of any instruction or training objectives, the satisfaction of psychological and physical needs must first be met as a means to realizing better outcomes. Students are unlikely to learn properly when they are in a negative state due to pressure. Therefore, educational institutions will be unable to achieve satisfactory results in terms of the business of teaching and learning if they just continually set their students overly excessive tasks without first considering the students' circumstances and feelings.

> *The negative lesson I received from our university's culture is…unrealistic standards and expectations…Because they overload us with tasks, there are times that we can't handle them all. The mental breakdown is too much to the point that our education is no longer aligned with our goals as students and the reason why we chose that particular school. It feels like we are always basing our performance around the school's expectations* (Woolf, 19)

Meanwhile, some of the participants highlighted that the pressure coming from their environment is not healthy since it seems that they are not allowed to experience failure, given that they are studying at a well-known, respected university. In a research study by Smith and Wertlieb (2005), it was highlighted that students with unrealistically high social or academic expectations had lower first-year grade point averages (GPAs) than those students who had average or below-average expectations. To avoid dissatisfaction from those around them, the current study's participants imposed high unrealistic standards upon themselves with the aim being to satisfy what people thought of them in terms of their academic achievement. As a result, the students take on tasks at the university mainly with the intention of achieving external validation from others.

> *I find the pressure of constantly trying to prove something to people is negative. Because most are expecting you to achieve greater heights just because you are in this well-known university, you have to constantly remind yourself that you should get approval, that your GWA* [General Weighted Average] *is impressive, and that your attainment in life is successful.* (Poe, 19)

Self-doubt. A few of the participants believed that pressure could lead them to doubt themselves. Pressure can be a regulator that forces people to react according to their take on a certain situation. There have been numerous studies in recent years that have indicated

that academic pressure contributes to anxiety, low self-esteem, and even suicidal idealization amongst high school students and young adults (Nguyen et al., 2019). It is supposed that when students enter college, they experience pressure from multiple sources, with pressure from their parents to succeed, from their college teachers to perform well academically, and pressure from themselves to do well in classes. This type of pressure can lead to high levels of anxiety and possibly even poor academic performance, resulting in students doubting their own abilities (Davis, 2014). Fitzgerald (18) mentioned that one of the main reasons for pressure-induced self-doubt is that some of his professors were perceived as inconsiderate:

> *They pressure us as students, such as setting consecutive activities without any pause in between. Also, the way they grade students without being considerate. They make me feel like all the effort I've put in all to all those rushed activities were in vain because of the grades I received I believed I hadn't deserved.* (Fitzgerald, 18)

While there is no basis for the inconsideration of professors, one study suggested that class-induced inconsideration by faculty may stem from their own personal struggles that impairs their performance (Yariv, 2011). Dickinson (19) stated a similar response, but her pressure-induced doubt stemmed from the institution's "high" standards:

> *The negative lesson that I experienced from the university was because of the university's very high standards. I find it difficult reaching the standards set… and this can make me doubt myself.* (Dickinson, 19)

Institutional pressure. College students experience pressure from multiple sources beginning in their first year of study (Davis, 2014). For example, they experience pressure from their parents, teachers, fellow students, and often themselves too. However, one of the most common root sources is institutional, which is a form of pressure exerted by the educational institution itself. Institutions function as forces on individuals and organizations, according to institutional theory, which considers the deeper and more robust parts of social structure, by producing social constraints and restrictions, and setting boundaries for what is deemed acceptable and what is not. Pressures that are normative, coercive, or mimetic can all have an impact (Davidsson et al., 2006). Social constraints on organizations and their members to comply with specified norms are known as normative pressures.

Coercive pressures are generally associated with formal institutions such as regulations or laws, but they can also refer to informal demands placed on businesses (e.g., technical standards imposed by one actor exerting power over another, as in a parent-subsidiary relationship). Mimetic pressures are requests on companies to imitate other organizations in order to deal with uncertainty. This applies to the context of the academe, revolving around processes by which structures, including schemes, rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior.

> *It's a highly standardized culture; we all know that this university is more than just another university. It's one of the best known institutions in the Philippines, and once you get in, others' expectations of you will also increase too, and that pressure is also set by the learners themselves who set a high standard of achievement expectation.* (Allende, 19)

> *They expect you to meet those standards in the given time… I observed that some of our professors want us to progress quickly because they reason that we need to be*

> *competitive, even with other universities that compete with our state university.* (Dickens, 21)

The participant students' responses, albeit limited to the context of the participant university, display manifestations of various pressures previously mentioned. There is an apparent shift seen in both external and internal perception and attitude toward neophyte students, and possibly others with a similar reputation. One probable reason for this is that unconscious justification can be traced to the university's reputation as a consistent producer of a competent workforce, as evidenced by the preferences of employers (ABS-CBN News, 2018) and exemplary performance in numerous board exams. Thus, the college students perceived a palpable level of institutional pressure.

4. CONCLUSION

The current study explored the hidden curriculum in the context of a higher education institution. The study revealed the participant students' prevailing behaviors and attitudes that would perhaps not otherwise be readily apparent. Mainly characterized by norms, the students appeared to pick these up with ease and seamlessly adapt to the university's culture. The hidden curriculum is implicitly learned. However, it remains as powerful as the explicit curriculum since it affects the students in that there are real implications for them. These implications can be both positive and negative and are derived from the university's own culture, that is, the amalgamation of overall expectations and interactions of the organizational members.

In terms of the positive, we determined that the participant students implicitly imbibed the value of being compassionate as exemplified by their college teachers and peers, which contributed to the improvement of their relationships and their general outlook in life. They also acquired certain behaviors and attitudes that are considered healthy for the development of their personality such as becoming more responsible, more communicative, and more open to the idea of risk-taking. Seeing that many of the participants openly helped each other, they also clearly learned to collaborate and deal with others through working on various projects both inside and outside the academic context; consequently, this made them appreciate the value of interdependence.

On the negative side, we discovered that the students' college teachers acted as a source of academic discord. In existence was also an apparent lack of sensitivity shown towards the students' plight which, if neglected, could perceivably debilitate their learning and engagement. Moreover, this expands to perceived social deviance practiced not only by some of the college teachers, but also by other students and manifested through the university's general culture. The primary motivation behind the pervasion of social deviance, such as toxic behavior and collective cheating, is said to be driven by the general notion of wanting to fit in. As the participant university holds an esteemed reputation in the Philippines, its members endeavor to maintain a high-pressure work environment, with unrealistic standards and expectations imposed on all.

Furthermore, we contend that if there is a group of people, such as in the university setting, there must be a hidden curriculum which is the result of the collective. By that, we pertain that social environments always offer a hidden curriculum. This proves Lieberman's (2013) assertion that our brain automatically learns from social environments that include others and how we relate to them. Observed or not, hidden curricula can be impactful on

individuals. Furthermore, we see that the development of hidden curricula can be subject to iterative cycles, whereby hidden curriculum influences the collective, then the collective influences the hidden curriculum, and so on.

5. SUGGESTIONS

As for the recommendations of the study, we suggest that the participant university pays close attention to the hidden, yet real, curriculum and its influences on its stakeholders. The institution's administrators must strive to make it clear so that they can understand how it affects the school community as a whole. They should reinforce the positive influences and lessen the negative of hidden curriculum on the institution's students. We recommend that the participant university's teaching staff become more mindful of the hidden curriculum's existence and how it plays a role in the education of their students. Like Ryan et al. (2010), we find that increasing awareness on this subject may help to address some of the issues related to students' academic and personal development.

College teachers must therefore use their actions and choice of words with prudence since their students are likely to learn implicitly from them. Likewise, college students develop a keen sense of awareness about the hidden curriculum in their place of study. If they fail to do so, they will unknowingly acquire negative attributes and limiting beliefs that may disempower them.

We recommend that future researchers extend the scope of the current study to a local or national scale to utilize different research methodologies, and also include university officials and teaching staff as participants in future research as they are also agents of the hidden curriculum. We hope that the current study can serve as an inspiration to other universities in order that they can develop appropriate policies related to this subject matter, and that it can spark conversations among its stakeholders.

DECLARATIONS

Author contributions: LG conceptualized the study and acted as the research lead of the group. MKCA and JJ wrote the introduction, JE and SML crafted the methodology, and LG and DLG composed the conclusion and recommendations. All authors contributed to the data generation and analysis. To ensure the collaboration and attainment of quality, online meetings were regularly conducted, and where the writing, discussion, and revising of this paper took place. Despite the busyness in their various endeavors, everyone contributed significantly with their time, effort, intellectual acumen, and dedication in the undertaking of this research.

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