Rants for Reform: Collective Consciousness and #LigtasNaBalikEskwela

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ABSTRACT

The shift to remote learning highlighted several issues in the Philippines; the most significant being the socioeconomic disparities experienced by Filipino learners in the unequal access to education in the remote learning setup. Such issues prompted the public to campaign for the safe reopening of schools using #LigtasNaBalikEskwela on Twitter (now known as X). Applying Émile Durkheim's Collective Consciousness to the digital space, this study aimed to identify how #LigtasNaBalikEskwela was utilized to construct the participating users' collective consciousness. Using thematic and discourse analyses, we inquired into the discourses in the #LigtasNaBalikEskwela network with the primary objective of elucidating what they collectively say about the situation of remote learning in the Philippines. Our analysis of 108 tweets revealed that the current learning setup brought about different struggles and challenges to the education sector. The tweets presented how users related their personal experiences with sociopolitical concerns through interactions in the network through the use of hashtags. We found that the hashtag was used to disseminate information on the resumption of on-site classes, to describe the worsening mental health of students, to discuss the technological and financial disparities highlighted by the online mode of learning, to raise the implications of remote learning on human rights, to discuss remote learning setup in the context of the pandemic, and to criticize the government's handling of the education sector amidst the pandemic. Our analysis also uncovered how communicative cues, such as the mention of mostly antagonistic lexical cues targeting the national government's imposition of remote learning, shaped their collective consciousness. By and large, these frames depict the remote learning situation in the Philippines as a collective struggle—which ultimately pushes the need to call for the safe return to face-to-face learning.

Background of the Study

In March 2020, then-Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte declared a state of public health emergency due to the spread of COVID-19 in the country. This declaration consequently imposed lockdown protocols across the Luzon region wherein the country met a sudden standstill in daily life (CNN Philippines, 2020; Tomacruz, 2020). All forms of travel were temporarily suspended; public gatherings, such as in-door dining, religious events, rallies, and protests, were prohibited; public transport was provisionally grounded (Dancel, 2020); and both government and private offices were forced to utilize work-from-home or skeletal work setups (Talabong, 2020).

The imposition of the lockdown likewise brought drastic repercussions to the country's different sectors, including health and wellness (Bayani & Tan, 2021), business and economics (Shinozaki & Rao, 2021), communications and media (Anwar et al., 2020), and education and learning (Agoncillo et al., 2020). What initially started as a week-long class suspension in affected areas evolved into a nationwide prohibition of in-person classes.

The Philippine Education System Amid the Pandemic

The sudden enforcement of local community quarantine guidelines prohibited all educational institutions from conducting in-person classes. This prompted educators to utilize different means to adapt to the present situation and continue the abrupt academic year (Simbulan, 2020). Such measures included the shift to a remote learning setup, which was performed through online learning platforms, modular learning (through the delivery of printed class modules to the students), or a combination of both (more commonly referred to as "blended learning") (Simbulan, 2020; Toquero, 2020a).

Though some academic institutions were able to adjust to the so-called "new normal," others were left to face its challenges given some schools' unpreparedness in migrating to this learning setup (Vitales et al., 2021). For instance, the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) provided schools autonomy in conducting alternative learning in the latter part of Academic Year 2019-2020. This impelled some institutions of both the basic and higher education sectors to abruptly end the academic year as a substitute for migrating to remote learning (Toquero, 2020b).

The unpreparedness of the local education sector was further accentuated in the succeeding academic year where reports showed a 27.3 percent drop in national enrollees, affecting a little over 3,000 teachers and 40,000 learners (Agoncillo et al, 2020; CNN Philippines, 2020). However, issues brought about by the shift to remote learning go beyond the aforementioned macroscale view

of the Philippines' education sector during the pandemic as these also elicited microscale socioeconomic, technological, and psychological implications.

Issues Under Remote Learning in the Philippines

Shifting to remote learning raised numerous apprehensions from various groups within the local education sector. Among these was the issue of economic recession due to the imposed lockdown protocols. Parents, teachers, and working students were laid off from their respective jobs or left to be economically strained. This resulted in the financial restraints experienced by Filipino students and their families in keeping up with the online learning setup, further exacerbating the already existing socioeconomic divide among students (Albert et al., 2018; Alvarez, 2020).

In a country known for its slow internet speed (Estella & Löffelholz, 2019), access to stable internet connection also proved to be a hindrance to learning during the pandemic. This was a huge impediment, especially for learners in rural or remote areas where roughly 53 percent of the Philippines' population resides (Teodoro, 2020). This was made evident by the Learner Enrollment and Survey Form conducted by the DepEd which showed that roughly 20 percent of 6.5 million students relied on computer shops or other similar public places for internet access. It is worth mentioning, however, that this does not include the reported 2.8 million students who had no means of accessing the internet at all.

Aside from the economic decline and the issue of technological disparities, remote learning in the Philippines also resulted in the rise of concerns relating to the mental health and well-being of students. A poor learning environment was found to adversely affect students' study productivity, concentration, and overall participation in remote learning (Baticulon et al., 2021; Chang & Fang, 2020; Rotas & Cahapay, 2020).

When students and teachers were forced to remain at home, challenges in remote learning also had consequences rooted in their respective personal circumstances (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020). This also contributed to their higher chances of experiencing learner burnout, leading to negative consequences on their academic performance (Amali, Bello, & Adeoye, 2018 as cited in Rotas & Cahapay, 2020; Poncian, 2017).

Overall, these issues pushed students, educators, and concerned citizens to turn to various platforms to convey their concerns on the current state of education in the Philippines; one of which is social media, with Twitter as one of the platforms most popularly used.

Twitter as a platform for online civic engagement

With the Philippines being known as the "social media capital of the world" (Abella-Zata, 2020), it is not surprising that Filipinos' social media use transcends entertainment and leisurely purposes. Aside from discussions involving pop culture (Barreiro, 2021), sociopolitical discourses are also widely observed on social networking sites—especially Twitter (now known as X) which is known for its organization of opinions on specific topics through the use of hashtags (Bruns & Burgess, 2015). Given such an affordance, Twitter users are regularly exposed to trending topics and encouraged to participate in online discussions by showing their support, or dissent, towards existing pools of opinions.

By fostering an atmosphere of community, Twitter has become a site for heated debates as well as calls for social movements. These evolving discourses are constantly being encountered and initiated by the Philippines' more than 11.8 million Twitter users (Statista, 2023).

Research Gap

The research landscape of similar topics in the Philippines is sparse as they were researched in sporadic intervals. Most of such studies employed methods like content and sentiment analysis, which, although reliable methods in their own right, can only take snapshots and bird's-eye-view perspectives of phenomena for the most part. By conducting discourse analysis, we intended to go beyond the bigger picture—we had made it a goal to launch a closer inquiry, thereby allowing us to achieve a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon we studied.

More than the literary and methodological gaps, we, as researchers, hold a high degree of positionality in regard to #LigtasNaBalikEskwela in that we believe that conducting research on it was the call of the time. We deemed it practical to echo and shed light on the sentiments and experiences of people in the education sector as well as those supporting them so the government and other stakeholders can, in turn, take a cue from them in terms of institutional decision-making and national policymaking.

Research Problem and Objectives

Even though the Philippine education sector, during the time of the study, was already transitioning into a hybrid mode of learning, we still deemed it important to study the discourse regarding remote learning that rose through online platforms. We wanted to ask: What are the ways in which #LigtasNaBalikEskwela was used to construct collective consciousness?

The main objective of this study is to examine how collective consciousness was formed through such tweets and its connection to the situation of remote learning in the Philippines.

To be more specific, this study aims to:

1. Inquire into the discursive ways in which collective consciousness was achieved; and
2. Elucidate what the discourses in #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets collectively say about the situation of remote learning in the Philippines.

Literature Review and Framework

The rapid developments in the spread of COVID-19 in the country during the first quarter of 2020 resulted in the need for the local education sector to adapt to the unforeseen situation. This was done in terms of crafting and issuance of policies that centered on minimizing the virus' spread in schools, particularly by suspending on-site classes.

Remote learning in the Philippines, as already previously noted, resulted in different challenges among various members of the education sector. The personal and political sharings as a result of such challenges gained traction through the use of hashtags, such as #LigtasNaBalikEskwela, on social media platforms like Twitter. As such, in addition to looking into the different experiences under remote learning amid the pandemic, this literature review likewise delved into studies on Twitter hashtags, specifically their relevance to mediated discourses and their role in flourishing online activism.

Experiences Under Remote Learning in the Philippines Amid the Pandemic

At a glance, previous studies explored the experiences under remote learning in the Philippines amid the COVID-19 pandemic by focusing on different stakeholders in the education sector—namely teachers, parents, and students. Most utilized phenomenological methods to understand the life-worlds that the Philippine education sector experiences in the phenomenon of remote learning. Meanwhile, other studies utilized surveys as a methodology to create a general description of these experiences based on data from their respective participants (see Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Baloran, 2020; Baticulon et al., 2021; Chaves, 2021; Gocotano et al, 2021; Rotas & Cahapay, 2020; Rotas & Cahapay, 2021).

Experiences of Teachers. The abrupt transition to remote learning presented different challenges for teachers who were attuned to teaching in a traditional classroom setup. These challenges included converting learning materials to

virtual formats, particularly science concepts that are better explained in a face-to-face setup through experiments. Additionally, issues like the lack of stable internet connection and the unavailability of up-to-date and technically capable devices were some of the struggles that science teachers grappled with in delivering lessons (Cahapay & Labrador, 2021). Teachers also raised issues on student competency as they discussed the validity of their own assessments and the low performances of their pupils (Cahapay et al., 2021). By and large, teachers struggled to deliver lessons and assess students in light of the remote learning modality. Just as teachers struggled to deliver their lessons, they also found difficulty in drawing means of support to improve remote learning.

Experiences of Parents. Even under these circumstances, teachers sought the need to collaborate with parents in improving the ways in which students learn (Cahapay & Labrador, 2021). Some measures included having parents observe as teachers administered performance tasks, asking for photos as a complimentary basis of assessment, and constant communication with them.

Parents also had negative sentiments toward remote learning due to the added responsibility of assisting their children with school tasks (Agaton & Cueto, 2021). It was also found that parents also had a hard time connecting with their children physically and emotionally. As Cahapay (2021) pointed out, "Parents experience structural, pedagogical, and relational difficulties as they get more involved in the remote learning of their children" (p. 185). Despite this, parents were resolute to let their children continue their education.

Experiences of Students. As for students, a variety of issues—such as physical and mental health, finances, peer communication, and overall learning quality— were commonly discussed. Students shared how they spent almost the entire day accomplishing activities, leading them to feel as though they were sacrificing their physical health for the sake of learning (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020; Gocotano et al., 2021). Students also expressed how remote learning gave them headaches, eyestrain, and back pain due to long exposure to devices (Gocotano et al., 2021). Mental health struggles were also prevalent which impacted their motivation (Alvarez, 2020; Baloran, 2020; Baticulon et al., 2021; Gocotano et al., 2021; Rotas & Cahapay, 2020).

Aside from physical and mental concerns, students also experienced difficulties in keeping up with remote learning because of financial constraints. The need to cover education-related expenses and the technological demand of online learning led students to pursue part-time jobs, and even go full-time (Alvarez, 2020; Baticulon et al., 2021; Gocotano et al., 2021; Rotas & Cahapay, 2020; Rotas & Cahapay, 2021).

In addition, students experienced difficulties in keeping up with their own learning due to inadequate resources. The low quality of teaching materials and inconsistent class schedules severely affected students in the conduct of remote learning (Baticulon et al, 2021; Rotas & Cahapay, 2021). Internet connectivity, as one of the most crucial resources, was also one of the top challenges that came with remote learning (Chaves, 2021).

Finally, students also experienced difficulties with regard to school-related correspondence as they struggled to communicate with their peers (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020) as well as their teachers and school administrators remotely (Baticulon et al., 2021; Rotas & Cahapay, 2020).

Civic Engagement Online and Hashtag Discourse

The current media landscape allows citizens to find unique ways to utilize new media in facilitating civic expression within and outside their personal networks. In contrast to traditional mass media which offers a one-way line of communication, the interpersonal nature of new media encourages open, public engagement among netizens. Given this, numerous online discussions have eventually led to the organization of social movements (David, 2013; Lee, 2017 as cited in Lee, 2018) to call for policy reform (Blasiola et al., 2015; Sáez-Martín et al., 2014 as cited in Roengtam et al., 2017) and to shape users' perception of reality (Bruns & Burgess, 2015; Vicari, 2017). As such, many studies have focused on the relevance of time in hashtag-meditated discourses, the formation of discursive communities on Twitter, the strengths and weaknesses of online activism, and the role of social media users in the digital public sphere.

Twitter has allowed its users to maximize public expression by giving them a space to freely contribute to different discourses on the platform at any given time. However, not all tweets garner the same attention, engagement, or impact. A tweet's reach greatly depends on its content as well as other algorithmic elements. For instance, only tweets by public accounts come up on Twitter's trending section which collates tweets that mention particular words or phrases.

Reach is further amplified through the use of hashtags, which Bruns and Burgess (2015) described as a "search-based mechanism for collating all tweets sharing a specific textual attribute, without any implication that individual messages are responding to one another" (p. 13). This means that tweets using the same hashtag are not necessarily related. Regardless, users utilize hashtags to share their sentiments and contribute to the online conversation on the topic (Johnson & Korn, 2013 as cited in Korn, 2015).

Within the aforementioned context, hashtags are popularly used as either messages themselves or as discursive markers. Specifically, the former entails utilizing hashtags as a homogenized collective response to the issue at hand. This

is when users mention the hashtag as a performative statement in support of a campaign's main cause. For example, a case study by Korn (2015) found that tweets that only contained the hashtag were used to express solidarity with the opposition, leading to the formation of virtual support communities.

Hashtags also ease navigation through the discourse as clicking on them leads users to the stream of existing tweets that mention a particular tag (Bruns & Burgess, 2015). Through this, users can participate in ongoing online discussions by engaging with relevant tweets containing the hashtag or by creating a new tweet with the hashtag, thus demonstrating the multiple uses of hashtags as tools in organizing public discourse online.

Temporality plays a big role in hashtag-mediated discursive assemblages (Rambakkuna, 2015). Breaking news and ongoing events heavily influence conversations on social media where netizens are apt to share their thoughts and reactions. Such discourses are usually mediated by hashtags, which, as previously discussed, serve as discursive or thematic markers to group tweets tackling the same topic. The surfacing (and resurfacing) of hashtags usually depends on the sociopolitical climate; the external context, or events happening in the offline world, greatly affect the online discussion (Sauter & Bruns, 2015). However, not all hashtags require a specific context to be used and understood (e.g., #win, #fail, #facepalm, etc.). As Rambakkuna (2015) noted, "[N]ot all hashtags have politics, create publics, or maintain communities."

Nonetheless, the power of hashtags in exercising online civic engagement must not be undermined. Studies have shown how hashtag campaigns bring social issues into the public consciousness and subsequently lead to the mobilization of collective action (Burgess & Crawford, 2011 as cited in Bruns & Burgess, 2015; Lynn et al., 2020).

Studies on Hashtag Activism in the Philippines

Instances of collective action brought by hashtag-mediated publics have also been researched in the local context. For example, in November 2013, Filipino netizens turned to social media to follow updates regarding the super typhoon Yolanda (known internationally as "Haiyan") that hit the Eastern Visayan islands of Samar and Leyte. With an influx of messages, Cordero and their fellow researchers (2014) turned to Twitter to identify common words used in tweets with #YolandaPH.

Another hashtag study used content analysis to identify prevalent forms of social support found in tweets containing #Fallen44 (Bautista & Lin, 2015). This was in response to the ambush of 44 Special Action Force troops which made headlines in January 2015.

Recent studies of hashtag activism in the Philippines include that of Alingasa and Ofreneo (2021), who explored the identities and meanings formed by the #BabaeAko campaign on Twitter in 2018. Their study delved into the use of this hashtag in marking the discourse of women advocates aiming to counter-argue former President Duterte and his supporters' statements against women. By positioning Filipino women as fearless and powerful, the campaign was able to redirect the narrative and unite like-minded feminists with the help of hashtag publics. The study found how emerging issues related to the topic shaped the online discourse.

In light of the lockdowns brought on by the COVID-19 outbreak, hashtag activism has increasingly become the go-to alternative to engaging in traditional on-the-ground protests. There have been multiple hashtags used to organize netizens' opinions on the government's pandemic response such as #MassTestingPH, which was studied by Bunquin and Gaw (2021) as an account of digital witnessing. Similarly, a study on the #ChurchInAction campaign on Facebook argued how this hashtag was used not only to propagate the Philippine Church's social engagement with the poor during the pandemic but also to serve as a symbol of activism against the rising anti-church sentiment online (Macaraan, 2021). The hashtag likewise served as a social tag that provided its users with "a sense of affiliation and an image of a collective despite not physically gathered together" (Macaraan, 2021, p. 2).

In terms of sociopolitical issues, Beduya et al. (2022) studied hashtag activism related to Philippine policymaking, specifically issues surrounding the crafting of the then Anti-Terrorism Bill of 2020 through the use of #JunkTerrorBillNow on Twitter. They explored how Twitter users' narratives provided insights into the temporal dynamics of public opinion on social change and critical issues related to the government's legislative priorities. They also recognized attempts to further elevate concerns on this law's passage, particularly that of human security.

Labor and San Pascual (2022) looked into how an LGBTQIA+ rights group based in the University of the Philippines Diliman maximized Facebook and Twitter as digital spaces in pushing for their advocacies. By anchoring their platforms' discourses to the importance and universality of human rights and Filipinos' sense of *kapwa* and *pakikipagkapwa*, they found that the group's strong online presence led to virtual demonstrations that, in turn, became manifestations of solidarity between and among LGBTQIA+ members (Labor & San Pascual, 2022).

Framework

According to Émile Durkheim (1965 cited in Pandey & Gupta, 2008), *collective consciousness* is formed by citing social forces that already operate within the society. To be more specific, these include shared beliefs, shared values, and cultural norms as they also function as a common ground in which individuals base their decisions on (Pandey & Gupta, 2008). In other words, one must integrate socially acceptable frames to appeal to the collective. These may not necessarily be in line with popular ideologies, but they must tap into the morals of the public. As such, our study positions Twitter as a platform for collective consciousness to prosper as the Twitter users utilized #LigtasNaBalikEskwela to share their personal experiences—their own sensations, feelings, images, and passions—and position them within a larger, relatable context such as the context of remote learning. Durkheim argued that the collective consciousness' degree of universality, generality, and impersonality is directly affected by the interaction and number of involved individuals, which then allows such individuals to become more aware of the external, material world (Harms, 1981). Thus, as our main research objective is to discover ways in which #LigtasNaBalikEskwela was used to construct collective consciousness, this study focused on the discourses surrounding the hashtag. As a social media platform, Twitter and its affordances allow users to freely express their experiences online through tweeting, retweeting, replying, liking, and generally interacting with other users, therefore contributing to the different discourses found on its site. From there, we saw that the *construction of collective consciousness* happens through the *discourses on remote learning.*

Methodology

Research Design and Methodology

This qualitative study followed an interpretivist paradigm and was guided by the concept of collective consciousness. Both textual analysis and discourse analysis were employed to examine these interactions through a qualitative lens.

In addition, this study was patterned after Barker-Plummer and Barker-Plummer's study (2017) on Twitter as a feminist resource which used content and discourse analysis to examine how #YesAllWomen was utilized for discursive activism. They found that discursive activism was found to aid in building knowledge on the topic of gender equality. In the same sense, we aim to understand how the #LigtasNaBalikEskwela online discourse was used to construct a collective consciousness regarding the situation of remote learning in the Philippines.

Concepts and Indicators

Given our study's two research objectives, our study looked into: (1) communicative strategies found in tweets using the hashtag, and (2) collective action through discourse.

To address our first objective, which was to inquire into the discursive ways in which collective consciousness was achieved, textual analysis was used to identify communicative cues present in the tweets. Such communicative cues were identified based on key terms and ways of expression through the use of language found in the #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets.

Matrix 1.
Concepts and Indicators for Objective 1

Concepts	Indicators
Communicative cues	a. Key terms b. Ways of expression in the tweet (Language use)

For the second objective, which was to elucidate what the tweets using the hashtag collectively say about the situation of remote learning, discourse analysis was used to look into how the call for collective action was achieved through the #LigtasNaBalikEskwela discussion. Specifically, this study analyzed the experiences, critiques, and commonly used interpretative frameworks in the hashtag discourse.

Matrix 2.
Concepts and Indicators for Objective 2

Concepts	Indicators
Collective consciousness through discourse	a. Sharing of experiences under remote learning b. Words and/or phrases providing critiques on remote learning c. Shared interpretive frames on remote learning

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in our study was a textual analysis guide. The guide was created with our research objectives and concepts and indicators in mind. The instrument was divided into three sections with each part corresponding to a specific objective.

Guide questions were also employed in the instrument to help us analyze the data. These questions were formulated per concept and indicator to help us analyze the texts systematically.

Unit of Analysis and Data Sampling

The main unit of analysis for the study were tweets from October 2021 to April 2022 that mentioned the hashtag #LigtasNaBalikEskwela. Data was collected from the said time frame as we observed this period as one of the times when the hashtag was frequently used. This was because students in the Philippines were well within the academic year during this time (DepEd Order No. 029, s. 2021, 2021; CHEd Memorandum Order No. 20, s. 2021, 2021) and developments on government policies regarding the resumption of face-to-face classes in the country were becoming more prevalent on social media.

Data Generation

The tweets that used #LigtasNaBalikEskwela were mined and retrieved using the free version of NodeXL, a network analysis and visualization package for Microsoft Excel capable of retrieving a minimum of 2,000 tweets from the last nine days of each mine. In line with the research problem and objectives, the keyword "#LigtasNaBalikEskwela" was used in collecting the data. The tweets mined through this platform served as the data corpus of this study.

After mining the tweets, we filtered the data corpus by filtering out duplicate tweets to ensure that only unique tweets remain. Subsequently, we applied criterion sampling to curate cases for in-depth analysis. Our sampling process using this technique prioritized the presence of an identifiable stance (whether the tweet supported, opposed, or expressed a neutral position) in relation to the call of #LigtasNaBalikEskwela. We also looked for other factors such as identifiable emotions and concerns expressed in the tweets. In addition, we also exercised our prerogative as the researchers to include any tweets that contained any element or ideas considered to be significant, meaningful, and useful to the study's analysis and interpretation of the underlying phenomenon. Following our sampling techniques, we generated the dataset composed of 108 tweets. The number was extracted from 5,934 unique tweets.

We wanted to give adequate attention to every tweet included in this sample, so we reduced them to a number that was sufficient but not too much. Simply put, we were concerned with both the quantity and the quality precisely because our goal was to provide coverage and, most importantly, depth.

Data Analysis

Given the nature of our data, we employed both textual analysis and discourse analysis to inquire into the collective consciousness as constructed in the tweets that used #LigtasNaBalikEskwela.

The tweets, now perceived as textual data, were analyzed in three cycles. The first cycle mainly dealt with data management and reduction. The second cycle, on the other hand, focused on describing the data. Finally, the third cycle of analysis was on interpreting the data and connecting it to the literature that we have gathered.

To systematically organize the data, we inductively analyzed the dataset through textual analysis. Particularly, we did textual analysis through axial coding and then clustered the codes to form an initial description. In part, this provided us with findings to answer our first objective of inquiring into the discursive ways of the text.

Getting an in-depth look at what the tweets were trying to express—both explicitly and implicitly—was done through discourse analysis. Discourse analysis (DA), a method directly interested in the social patterns of meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2013), was used to analyze the collected tweets. It assumes that social processes, activities, and experiences can be understood by looking through the level of language and discourse. It "involves an attention to the ways in which language does more than reflect what it represents, with the corresponding implication that meanings are multiple and shifting rather than unitary and fixed" (Burman & Parker, 1993 as cited in Taylor and Ussher, 2001). In the context of our study, our in-depth analysis of the texts was executed using process coding and structural coding which served as our second cycle analysis.

Finally, we linked our findings in the first and second cycles to the literature, serving as our third cycle of analysis.

Ethical Considerations

While the current study analyzed tweets gathered from Twitter which itself is considered a public domain, confidentiality was nonetheless upheld in the conduct of research as well as in the writing of the report. To ensure this, any personal modifiers like username, name, birthdate, location, and any other credentials that could be obtained from Twitter user profiles were not included in conducting the analysis nor were they mentioned in this report.

Unfortunately, we were unable to formally ask for the consent of the users of the analyzed tweets given that the tweets were collected over a relatively long period and that some of the collected tweets were no longer accessible online. However, we, the researchers, see no potential harm that could occur to the users as our study did not utilize any data that could be linked to their identities.

Scope and Limitation

This study only covered the text conveyed in tweets that specifically mentioned #LigtasNaBalikEskwela. The time frame for the collection of this study was only between the dates of October 11, 2021 to April 30, 2022.

Since we utilized a free version of NodeXL, the program could only mine 2,000 tweets per collection. Additionally, there were instances when one collection only captured two days' worth of data, so some data from certain days were not retrieved.

Finally, the study only focused on the tweets and not their users. This means that our inquiry was only able to cover the tweets composed by the pertinent users and not necessarily their lived experiences, or a large portion thereof.

Results and Discussion

We looked at the ways collective consciousness on the state of remote learning in the country was constructed on Twitter. It was necessary to: (1) look into the discursive ways in which this consciousness was achieved, and (2) elucidate what #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets collectively say about the remote learning situation in the local context.

Tweets in the #LigtasNaBalikEskwela network feature an array of perspectives, viewpoints, and opinions from Twitter users. Most dwelled on the current state of the Philippines' education sector under the pandemic. Users also shared their takes on issues they deemed relevant, albeit not directly related, to the call for a safe reopening of schools in the country.

Inquiring into the discursive ways in which the collective consciousness was achieved

Criticizing the Current Educational Setup. In the call to resume face-to-face classes in the country, tweets that used the hashtag heavily criticized the online learning setup. Such tweets lambasted remote learning either in a generalistic manner or within the frame of the "new normal." In addition, the tweets included sentiments of displeasure. For instance, a tweet portrayed how the new normal was unfair:

Anyway, I am not literally laughing on what they do or sumn'. I actually annoyed 'cause almost of us didn't sleep to review & to have a passing scores yet someone will took advantage of this online class. It shows how rot and unfair the new normal is. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela

Other tweets expressed dismay towards remote learning by mentioning sentiments towards the online setup. One tweet mentioned unhappiness with the setup due to the experience of academic-related difficulties:

*Nagugulat na lang ako, may lumagpas na palang deadline. Parang ang dami kong ginagawa pero parang wala naman akong natatapos. Parang ang dami kong inaaral pero after a short period of time, wala na kong maalala. **Hindi na kami masaya sa ganitong setup.** #LigtasNaBalikEskwela*

[I will only be surprised that a deadline has already passed. It seems like I am doing a lot but I do not seem to be finishing anything. It seems like I am studying a lot but after a short period of time, I cannot remember anything. We are no longer happy with this setup. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela]

While some tweets expressed personal experiences, others took a more general approach to sharing sentiments. There were tweets that mentioned the time when students in the country were "imprisoned" to the remote setup. One user described online learning as *oppressive* and *anti-student*:

*Ngayong araw ay eksaktong **dalawang taon na tayong kinukulong sa online learning**, at sa loob ng panahong ito ay **lalo tayong pinahirapan ng mga anti-estudyanteng polisiya** at mga atake sa kalayaang pang-akademiko. Sobra na ang dalawang taon. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela, ngayon na!*

[Today, it has been exactly two years since we were confined to online learning, and during this time we have been increasingly tormented by anti-student policies and attacks on academic freedom. Two years is too much. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela, now!]

Other tweets illustrated thoughts on the education system as a whole. Here, netizens argued that the conditions of the education system further worsened due to remote learning. With what seems to be a proposed solution, one tweet promoted the call for an alternative education system that is *mass-oriented*, *nationalistic*, and *scientific*:

*WAKASAN ANG **2 TAONG PAGHIHIRAP** SA REMOTE LEARNING! Patuloy tayong makibaka para sa Ligtas na Balik Eskwela! Palakasin ang ating mga panawagan sa **makamasa, makabayan, at siyentipikong porma ng edukasyon**! Basahin ang buong pahayag dito: https://tinyurl.com/2p958vzf*

[END THE 2 YEARS OF SUFFERING UNDER REMOTE LEARNING! Let us continue to fight for Ligtas Na Balik

Eskwela! Strengthen our calls for mass, patriotic, and scientific forms of education! Read the full statement here: https://tinyurl.com/2p958vzf]

In amplifying the demand for the return to the pre-pandemic education system, users first assessed what they have been experiencing in the present setup. Framing their awareness as a result of their own experiences, the network of users that utilized the hashtag allowed them to enjoin others to air grievances about remote learning and the education system as a whole. Negative sentiments were significant in these tweets, with dissatisfaction being the most salient.

Calling for help. Criticisms towards remote learning were not the only expressions in using #LigtasNaBalikEskwela. Verbal cues such as the mention of *mental health*, *pagod* (tired), and *exhausted* were often used to describe current dispositions. One tweet expressed how the setup drains their emotional and mental energies:

> *Ano bang panghahawakan ng mga estudyante kapag Alert Level 3 na? Level 4? Level 5? Wala syempre kasi ang edukasyon sa gitna ng isang pandemya ay hindi priority.* **Pagod na ako** *sa set-up na 'to.* **Ubos na ubos na ako** *emotionally at mentally. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela*

> [What do students have to hold on to when alert levels 3, 4, and 5 come? Of course, nothing—because education in the midst of the pandemic is not a priority. I am tired of this setup. I am fully consumed emotionally and mentally. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela]

Another tweet expressed how these dilemmas greatly affected their learning capacity:

> While we greatly value the importance of education, remote learning has taken a **huge toll in our mental health**, and has, therefore, drastically **affected our learning intake** this pandemic. So, that's precisely why we must call for a genuine reading break and #LigtasNaBalikEskwela!

Similar tweets claim that the current setup made students feel restless and that the return to face-to-face classes would serve as the appropriate remedy.

> *[1/3] at this point, hindi na effective ang kahit anong study routine* **pagod na po talaga kaming lahat**

> *[2/3] wala naman talaga kasi sa option ang mamahinga sa ganitong sitwasyon 'yung paghiga namin gabi-gabi nakalaan lang din sa pag-o-*

overthink kung paano tatapusin lahat ng workloads kinabukasan ang remedy lang talaga dito ay #LigtasNaBalikEskwela

[[1/3] At this point, any study routine is no longer effective; we are all tired.

[2/3] Rest is not an option in this setup—the resting time we have at night is spent overthinking how we can finish our workload the next day. The only remedy for this is #LigtasNaBalikEskwela.]

Physical and mental strains experienced by the education sector were clearly manifested through the #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets. In line with the findings of Rotas and Cahapay (2020), users expressed both their specific individual and collective struggles online, such as their inability to learn under remote learning and feelings of being overwhelmed. There was an underlying sense of restlessness and helplessness in the texts of such tweets, as these served as an outlet for users to release the stresses of remote learning.

Mentioning Administrative Concerns. Interestingly, a number of #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets cited specific government bodies and school administrators. These tweets have similar textual cues from previous themes with the added mention of administrative entities.

One example of this was the mention of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). This tweet addressed the agency to express distress:

*To **CHED**, di talaga effective ang online classes. Sobrang **naapektuhan ang physical and mental health ko**. Ngayon, di ko alam kung makakapagpatuloy pa ako sa course na pinili ko. Pakibalik na f2f classes please. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela*

[To CHED, online classes are really not effective. My physical and mental health was greatly affected. Now, I do not know if I can continue with the course I chose. Revert back to f2f classes please. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela]

Another case of mentioning an institution would be the succeeding tweet which lambasted the administration. This tweet also included phrases meant for forwarding matters of education:

*Balik-paaralan, makupad at pahirapan! Nananawagan ang STAND BulSU sa **lokal na administrasyon**, **CHED** at **rehimeng Duterte** na ang karapatdapat na balik-eskwela ay yaong ligtas, makamasa, at para*

sa lahat at hindi magasta at elitista! ***Makibaka, huwag matakot!*** *#LigtasNaBalikEskwela*

[Return to schools, slow and anti-poor! STAND BulSU calls on the local administration, CHED, and the Duterte regime that the return to schools is one that is safe, inclusive, and for all and not expensive and elitist! Struggle, do not be afraid! #LigtasNaBalikEskwela]

Other tweets also mentioned school administrators. These tweets typically included lexical cues that are antagonistic. This set of tweets, for example, mentioned a certain college and criticized its academic policies:

pup tangena di porket alert level 1 na eh gumaan na pamumuhay ng mga estudyante't propesor!!! ***paka anti mahirap naman ng memo na yan*** *sana sinaksak niyo nalang ako #AcademicEaseNow #NoStudentsLeftBehind #LigtasNaBalikEskwela*

[pup what the fuck just because it is now alert level 1 does not meet that life has gotten easier for the students and professors!!! that memo is so anti poor I wish you would have stabbed me instead #AcademicEaseNow #NoStudentsLeftBehind #LigtasNaBalikEskwela]

I urg the **UP admin** to not follow the footsteps of the **PUP admin** (i.e. Memo Order 05 s. 2022 from PUP-OVPAA). Unless if we have a genuine #LigtasNaBalikEskwela, it is **not the right time to issue such similar policy**.

Users mentioned these entities to blame for the continuance of the remote learning setup. They were framed as perpetrators of their struggles. Despite this antagonism, these tweets expressed hope that these bodies take concrete steps towards the safe return to face-to-face classes.

Going Beyond the Hashtag. Although #LigtasNaBalikEskwela was specifically used to call for the safe reopening of physical classes, there were also other education-related hashtags used alongside it. Such hashtags included "#NoStudentLeftBehind" and "#WalangIwanan___." Similar to the previous themes, these tweets also included sentiments of displeasure, personal experiences, and dispositions:

My inner duty was upset when I heard that some of my classmates were considering dropping out due to the difficulty

of online set up. It clearly demonstrates how our educational system has failed and is favored by the privileged.

#LigtasNaBalikEskwela
#**nostudentleftbehind**

Another tweet explicitly mentioned a certain college in the Cordilleras in campaigning for the right to education.

> *Ako si Fred ng ACS, at kaisa ako para makamit ang isang inklusibo siyentipiko, at komprehensibong hakbangin para sa Ligtas na Balik Eskwela! IPAGLABAN ANG KARAPATAN SA EDUKASYON! IPAGLABAN ANG LIGTAS NA BALIK ESKWELA! #LigtasNaBalikEskwela #BantayBalikEskwela #WalangIwananUPB*

> [I am Fred from ACS, and I am one to achieve inclusive scientific, and comprehensive steps for Safe Return to Schools! FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION! FIGHT FOR A SAFE RETURN TO SCHOOL! #LigtasNaBalikEskwela #BantayBalikEskwela #WalangIwananUPB]

There were also tweets that mentioned government entities or school administrations alongside other education-related hashtags:

> Instead of learning smth, we're stressing ourselves out just to pass all the activities. This school system is fvcked up. Deped officials, aren't you ashamed?

> #**AcademicBreakNow** #LigtasNaBalikEskwela

Prevalent in these types of tweets are calls for participation. Hashtags such as #NoStudentLeftBehind, #WalangIwanan, and #AcademicBreakNow widen the scope of #LigtasNaBalikEskwela and construct collective consciousness.

Transcending Matters of Education. Not all tweets that mentioned the hashtag mentioned online learning. There were some tweets that pertained to issues that have no direct connection to the call for the safe reopening of schools. For example, there were #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets that tackled societal issues such as oil price hikes:

> *PRESYO NG LANGIS, IBABA! MGA PAARALAN, BUKSAN NA! ANG TAAS NA NG MATRIKULA! ANG TAAS PA NG LANGIS! OIL PRICE HIKE AT TUITION INCREASE, PAHIRAP SA KABATAANG*

PILIPINO! #UPLBNoStudentLeftBehind #LigtasNaBalikEskwela
#NoToOilPriceHike #SuspendOilExciseTax

[LOWER OIL PRICES! OPEN THE SCHOOLS!
MATRICULATION IS SO HIGH! THE OIL IS HIGH! OIL
PRICE HIKE AND TUITION INCREASE ARE OPPRESSIVE
FOR THE FILIPINO YOUTH! #UPLBNoStudentLeftBehind
#LigtasNaBalikEskwela #NoToOilPriceHike
#SuspendOilExciseTax]

Another tweet added to this by mentioning the Oil Deregulation Law,
saying:

nagkasa tayo ngayong araw ng pagkilos sa harap ng Bulacan State
University upang ipanawagan ang ligtas na pagbabalik eskwela at
pagbasura ng oil deregulation law*! #LigtasNaBalikEskwela*
#OhMyGasAngTaas

[we conducted protest action today in front of the Bulacan
State University to call for a safe return to school and to
repeal the oil deregulation law! #LigtasNaBalikEskwela
#OhMyGasAngTaas]

#LigtasNaBalikEskwela was also used to forward LGBTQIA+ calls
and campaigns. These types of tweets contained phrases that encouraged
participation in the community's cause while also mentioning respective
educational institutions:

Help break the silence, turn up your voices. **Be**
LOUD and QUEER! 📣 **Happy Week of Colors!**
🌈✨#HappyWeekOfColors #SOGIEEqualityNow
#BulacanADoNow! #MagnaCartaIpasa
#LigtasNaBalikEskwela

Ako si Merylle ng PUP Kasarianlan at ako ay kaisa sa mga tumitindig
para sa pag-alpas at pagbuwag ng pasismo tungo sa bagong sistema!
#PUPPride2022 #ALPASPasismoBuwaginSistemaBaguhin
#SOGIEEqualityNow #LigtasNaBalikEskwela #Halalan2022

[I am Merylle of the PUP Kasarianlan and I am one
with those who stand up for escaping from and
dismantling the fascism towards a new system!

#PUPPride2022   #ALPASPasismoBuwaginSistemaBaguhin #SOGIEEqualityNow #LigtasNaBalikEskwela #Halalan2022]

Although the tweets did not construe a direct connection to calling for the safe reopening of schools, we understood these tweets as a message that the call for a safe return to physical class is equally important to the calls advocating for social change. Mentioning the hashtag alongside other pertinent issues in the country expanded the advocacy in the campaign of opening face-to-face classes.

In conclusion, tweets that included #LigtasNaBalikEskwela had similarities in communicative strategies. There were words, phrases, and tonality that were present across our sample. From mentioning concerns about physical and mental conditions to airing out grievances, there were recurring lexical cues that allowed other users to associate and interact with such tweets. This subsequently strengthened and mobilized the social movement (Alperstein, 2019). Along with the use of other hashtags, either education-related (e.g., #NoStudentLeftBehind, #AcademicBreakNow) or other sectoral campaigns (e.g., #NoToOilPriceHike, #SOGIEEqualityNow), this advocacy expanded its reach and further diversified its content (Bruns & Burgess, 2015).

Elucidating What #LigtasNaBalikEskwela Tweets Collectively Say About the Situation of Remote Learning in the Philippines

The #LigtasNaBalikEskwela discourse provided substantial insights into the situation of remote learning in the Philippines. In sharing personal experiences and critiques, users expressed their values, attitudes, and beliefs on remote learning. In short, the remote setup was mostly framed negatively.

We found that the hashtag was used to share information on the return to in-person classes, to describe the declining mental health of students, to raise awareness of the inequality brought about by the online mode of learning, to speak up about the implications of remote learning on human rights, to discuss remote learning in the context of the pandemic, and to criticize the government's handling of the education sector amidst the pandemic.

Remote learning as temporary. The hashtag was used to share updates on the eventual resumption of on-site learning in their respective schools and communities. Such tweets mostly mentioned survey forms and announcements.

📢SURVEY   FORM   REGARDING   F2F/BLENDED LEARNING📢

Good day, CASmates!The CASSC prepared a F2F/Blended Learning Survey Form. **Relevant information will be used in crafting a roadmap for LNBE.** You may access the

form here: https://bit.ly/CAS-F2FBlendedLearningSurvey #LigtasNaBalikEskwela #CASGanaps

[1 of 2] #LigtasNaBalikEskwela | Last March 22, 2022, the UP Diliman, through the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs released the guidelines for **the gradual reopening of face-to-face class activities** 📝👉 You may access the guidelines here: https://bit.ly/UPDGradualF2F [2 of 2] There are currently 338 students attending limited face-to-face classes in the university, while other colleges are still encouraged to apply for physical classes. **We recognize this as a success in our fight for a safe and gradual reopening of classes.** Through our effort to conduct student consultations & dialogue with the administration, we were able to forward our collective demands & concerns to be incorporated in the updated guidelines.

Para sa #LigtasNaBalikEskwela The Galing Pook Foundation and UNICEF have finished off a series of FGDs and community consultations last Apr 27-29, 2022 in the municipalities of Bobon and Capul, Northern Samar **to support the planning and preparation for safe in-person learning.**

[For #LigtasNaBalikEskwela The Galing Pook Foundation and UNICEF have finished off a series of FGDs and community consultations last Apr 27-29, 2022 in the municipalities of Bobon and Capul, Northern Samar to support the planning and preparation for safe in-person learning.]

As these users aim to reach their audience through the hashtag, such efforts tell us that there is a demand for a safe return to face-to-face classes. From this, we can infer that remote learning was not the most favorable setup for most members of the education community and that students yearned to go back to the pre-pandemic mode of education. These tweets show the progress of the #LigtasNaBalikEskwela campaign as the era of compulsory remote learning was coming to an end.

Remote Learning and its Degenerating Effects on the Mental Well-being of Students. One of the most prevalent concerns mentioned in the #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets involved the mental health of students. These tweets were written from the perspective of students sharing their personal experiences under remote learning. While some generally mention how the setup

negatively affected their overall mental health, others went into further detail by explaining how it caused them to constantly feel exhausted and unmotivated.

> *Kung **lugmok ang** mental health **ng maraming kabataan sa panahon ng** online classes, paano kaya kung face-to-face na? Dapat itong pag-usapan dahil panibagong adjustment na naman ito para sa ating lahat. Dapat bahagi ito sa diskurso ng #LigtasNaBalikEskwela.*

> [If the students' mental health is compromised during online classes, what would happen come the resumption of face-to-face ones? This has to be talked about as it [the resumption of face-to-face classes] would entail an adjustment period for all. This has to be a part of the #LigtasNaBalikEskwela discourse.]

> While we greatly value the importance of education, **remote learning has taken a huge toll in our mental health**, and has, therefore, drastically affected our learning intake this pandemic. So, that's precisely why we must call for a genuine reading break and #LigtasNaBalikEskwela!

> *at this point, hindi na effective ang kahit anong study routine **pagod na po talaga kaming lahat** wala naman talaga kasi sa option ang mamahinga sa ganitong sitwasyon yung paghiga namin gabi-gabi nakalaan lang din sa pag-o-overthink kung paano tatapusin lahat ng workloads kinabukasan ang remedy lang talaga dito ay #LigtasNaBalikEskwela okay siyempre pagtapos magreklamo gagawa pa rin naman tayong acads kasi wala naman tayong choice*

> [at this point, any study routine is no longer effective because we are all tired. Rest is not an option in this setup—the resting time we have at night is spent overthinking how we can finish our workload on the next day. The only remedy for this is #LigtasNaBalikEskwela. We'll still work on our academic requirements albeit the complaint because it isn't like we have any choice.]

> *utang na loob bigyan nyo na kami ng #LigtasNaBalikEskwela kasi sobrang **nakakawalang gana + nakakapagod na ng** online setting **na 'to***

[please, give us #LigtasNaBalikEskwela as this online setting has become too demotivating and exhausting.]

Delving deeper into emotions, students also shared their feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and sadness during the course of the lockdown. These feelings may have arisen due to their workload, sudden feelings of grief over lost time due to the pandemic, or because of their home life.

dapat ang panawagan na ngayon ay #LigtasNaBalikEskwela. no amount of adjusting workload will work unless this pandemic ends. **we could have 0 backlogs but still end up stressed and alienated.** besides, ripe *na ang* conditions for us to open schools.

[The call now should be #LigtasNaBalikEskwela. No amount of adjusting workload will work unless this pandemic ends. We could have zero backlogs but still end up stressed and alienated. Besides, the conditions are already ripe for us to open schools.]

i regret all those times when i was too busy to appreciate the littlest things in our campus. *ultimo yung paglakad lang ulit sa* school, *pagtingin sa mga puno at* buildings, **sobrang bigat na ng** feeling. *ang sakit pa rin ng dalawang taong ninakaw sa amin.* #LigtasNaBalikEskwela

[I regret all those times when I was too busy to appreciate the littlest things on our campus. Even walking to school and looking at trees and buildings there now feel so heavy. It still pains me to know that we have been robbed of two years. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela]

kakalungkot lang na halos ala na nga aq sleep cause of the workload **tas mariringig q pa na ala raw ako kwenta** *sa hauz* but what's worse is i cant blame them *kc alam ko naman na d na aq masyado nakakapagparticipate sa house chores.. pero* what can i do #LigtasNaBalikEskwela *na* pls

[it saddens me that I am sleepless and that I am being referred to as worthless at home. What's worse is that I can't really blame them because I know that I barely help out in house chores. But what could I do? Please, #LigtasNaBalikEskwela.]

In terms of efforts to alleviate students' burden concerning academic life, one user criticized their school's ignorance when it comes to student welfare.

> *paano maeensure ang kalidad ng edukasyon* **kung walang pagkonsulta sa** quality ng wellness *ng mga estudyante*? funny how they can say they are for quality education and fall deaf to our calls under the same breath. #AcademicBreakNowSLU #WalangIwananLouisian #LigtasNaBalikEskwela

> [how could the quality of education be ensured if there are no consultations with regard to the quality of wellness of the students? It's funny how they can say they are for quality education while falling deaf to our calls under the same breath. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela]

Overall, the situation of remote learning cannot be discussed without mentioning the experiences of students regarding their mental health. The general message of #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets mentioning mental health is that students were unable to cope with the online mode of learning. With that, students used the hashtag to pertain to the return to on-site classes which they deemed to be the solution to their worsening mental health conditions.

Remote learning favors the privileged. Users also noted how the education system highlighted the technological disparity among members of the education sector. More so, the online setup gave an advantage to students with access to technological and financial resources.

> Questionable *pa rin 'yung* periodical exam *na malakas makapang hatak sa grado*. It can be done by cheating as such looking up the answers on search engine particularly Google. Since online class *malaki ang* chance *na makaperfect o makakuha ng mataas na marka*. Unfair ***ito sa mga nag*** review ***o walang*** gadget/internet **para makasabay sa ganitong sistema ng pag-aaral**. *Ito ang pag bubunga ng palpak na tugon sa pandemya ng administrasyong* Duterte. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela

> [It is questionable how periodical exams have so much bearing in terms of grades when students can, in fact, just look the answers up using search engines like Google. Online classes have made it easy to perfect [tests] and get high marks. This is unfair to those who have no means to keep up in this education setup. This is a manifestation of the failing pandemic response by the Duterte administration. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela]

My inner duty was upset when I heard that some of my classmates were considering dropping out due to the difficulty of online set up. It clearly demonstrates how our educational system has failed and is **favored by the privileged**. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela #nostudentleftbehind

Please, stop romanticizing students' resiliency. *Wag na tayo maglokohan*. Anti-poor *talaga ang* "flexible learning" or online class. ***Para makasabay ka, kailangang meron kang* stable internet connection *at* mid-range to high-range laptop**. #NoStudentLeftBehind #LigtasNaBalikEskwela

[Please stop romanticizing the students' resilience. Let's stop making a fool of ourselves—"flexible learning" or online classes are really anti-poor. For one to keep up, one has to have a mid-range or a high-end laptop. #NoStudentLeftBehind #LigtasNaBalikEskwela]

Such tweets framed the remote learning setup as unfair since not all students have an equal opportunity to excel given that access to gadgets and a stable internet connection can affect one's class performance. Tweets like these acknowledged that circumstances differ from student to student, especially when it came to facing such issues that were not present during face-to-face learning.

Remote Learning as a Violation of the Right to Education. Building upon the previous theme, numerous tweets presented the mode of learning as a barrier to education. In addition to the unequal access to learning resources needed for online classes, users framed both students and teachers as victims of the education system.

No, the call for #LigtasNaBalikEskwela should not be used to shame students who are **victims of the educational system**.

Kasi yung mga professors *ay **biktima rin ng set-up na to**. Kung di sila magbibigay ng deadline, maiipunan sila ng iche-check sa end ng sem. Dahil may deadline din sila. Kaya naman* #LigtasNaBalikEskwela *dapat. Altho may mga* professor *nga talaga na mabait na* instead *na magbigay ng deduction sa late submissions*, plus points *na lang sa mga* early *magpasa.*

[Because professors are also victims of this setup. If they don't impose deadlines, they'd end up with a pile of stuff to check at the end of the semester. They, too, have to follow deadlines.

This is why #LigtasNaBalikEskwela has to be realized. There are professors who are considerate enough not to charge penalties on late submissions and, instead, incentivize those who submit earlier.]

From a sociopolitical perspective, netizens integrated the topic of human rights into the discussion of remote learning. Such tweets framed remote learning as a violation of the right to education by citing that said mode of learning makes education inaccessible.

In the Philippines, **barriers to education include a significant digital divide exacerbated by the shift to remote learning and pre-existing threats to human rights**. We believe addressing this, alongside calling for #LigtasNaBalikEskwela, is crucial for #MapagpalayangEdukasyon.

nananatiling inaksisable ang edukasyon kahit pa ito'y isang karapatan nating dapat na natatamasa. patuloy na igiit ang ating mga panawagan at panagutin ang mga nasa likod ng pagpapaigting ng neoliberal na eduk! #LigtasNaBalikEskwela #BantayBalikEskwela #WalangIwananUPB

[Education remains inaccessible even though it is a right that we all must enjoy. Let us continue in putting forth our call for accountability of those who are enabling neoliberal education. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela #BantayBalikEskwela]

MO 05, *IBASURA! LIGTAS NA BALIK ESKWELA! HINDI* HELL SEM POLICY! ***Patuloy tayong makibaka sa pagsulong ng ating demokratikong karapatan sa edukasyon****! Ibasura ang mga anti-estudyanteng polisiya ng* PUP! #LigtasNaBalikEskwela #NoToHellSemPolicy

[TRASH MO 05! GIVE US #LIGTASNABALIKESKWELA AND NOT A HELL SEMESTER POLICY! We will continue to fight and uphold our right to education! Trash anti-student policies! #LigtasNaBalikEskwela #NoToHellSemPolicy]

Bulag sa tunay na kalagayan ng mga Iskolar ng Bayan ang PUP! *Hindi kailanman nagbago ang krisis na kinakaharap ng mga Iskolar ng Bayan! Bukod sa walang tapat at ganap na hakbang ang* PUP *admin sa* #LigtasNaBalikEskwela, *mas pinapalala pa nito ang kalagayan sa* **hindi makataong moda**

[They are oblivious to the situation of the students when it has never changed! Aside from the administration's lack of honest and concrete steps #LigtasNaBalikEskwela, they are making things worse through inhumane modes of education.]

These tweets emphasize the failure of the education sector to uphold the right to quality education. Subjecting students and teachers to push forth with working under unfavorable conditions compromised the quality of learning. Overall, these #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets frame remote learning as unjust and undemocratic.

Remote Learning as a Way to Contain the Spread of COVID-19. Tweets that used #LigtasNaBalikEskwela also mentioned the context under which remote learning came about which was in response to the pandemic. These tweets mainly focused on the safety or *ligtas* aspect of the call.

So are our teachers prepared to hold classes in a HYBRID way? This is the direction we seem to be headed. **I'm not feeling optimistic about this gradual reopening when the government has not ensured #LigtasNaBalikEskwela.**

#LigtasNaBalikEskwela means having safer means of transportation, better contact tracing strategies, and reached herd immunity. We are not lab rats. There should be no trials and errors here. It's life against life. C'mon.

me saying no to ftf class survey *kasi* pls concrete plans *muna bago* survey, *ayoko i*-risk health *ng mga kasama ko sa bahay* 🙂 *Di pa talaga ready. Yung gobyerno nga bigla bigla nalang nag desisyon niyang mga alert alert na yan. Gusto ko muna makarinig na* concrete plan, *paano niyo gagawin yan*. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela

[me saying no to face-to-face classes in surveys because plans have to be concretized first; I do not want to risk the health of those whom I'm with at home. We are still not yet ready. Even the government decides on alerts rather abruptly. I first want to hear concrete plans—how they intend to do it. #LigtasNaBalikEskwela]

Hindi solusyon yung Alert Level 2 *para paghawakan ng mga estudyante sa* F2F classes. **Dapat Ligtas at kapag na-ensure**, *kahit anong level ay makasisiguro na hindi makokompromiso ulit ang edukasyon. 'Di*

pwedeng may pasok kami bukas pero susunod ay online na naman. *Napapagod na kami.*

[Alert Level 2 is not a solution that students can hold on to come face-to-face classes. The reopening of schools has to be safe, and once this has been ensured, we can make sure that education won't be compromised regardless of the alert level. We can't just alternate between face-to-face and online classes. We are getting tired.]

Here, users urged for a safe return to on-site classes. This meant ensuring that students would not be at risk of contracting the virus. In sum, these tweets acknowledged remote learning as a solution to controlling the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Remote learning as a consequence of the government's incompetence. Since the beginning of the lockdown, the national government has been heavily criticized for its pandemic response. As the need for social distancing led to the implementation of remote learning, users concluded that their struggles under the remote learning setup were consequences of the government's mishandling of the situation. In addition, given that this was a national issue, users mentioned the hashtag to discuss the role of the government in the resumption of on-campus learning.

Teka balik-eskwela lang yan imbis na #LigtasNaBalikEskwela *kung hindi aayusin ng gobyerno* pandemic response. *Gusto lang ng* CHED *na pagandahin* year-end *report nila KUNG yung nilatag nilang kondisyon, kakargohin ng mga guro & estudyante* w/o *subsidyo & ayuda* from gov't. *Di ba?*

[Wait, that's just reopening of schools and not really #LigtasNaBalikEskwela safe reopening of schools if the government doesn't fix their pandemic response. It would appear as if CHED only wants to make their year-end report look good if the conditions have to be shouldered by teachers and students without subsidies and help from the government, right?]

Bagamat hakbang pasulong ang pag-apruba ng limited F2F, *ang tatlong kondisyon na nabanggit ay pinapasang* burden *ng* national government *sa mga* LGUs *at mga paaralan. Kasalanan ba nila na walang malawakan at maayos na* vaccine rollout system *sa buong bansa? Dagdag pa rito, ang pagretrofit ng mga pasilidad ay mangangailangan ng dagdag na*

budget. *Pero para sa* 2022, *malalaking* budget cuts *ang kinaharap ng* education sector. **Ang panawagang** #LigtasNaBalikEskwela **ay dapat naka-angkla sa** responsibilidad **ng estado sa sektor ng edukasyon**"

[Even though the approval of limited face-to-face classes is a step forward, the three conditions mentioned are just burdens that the national government passes on to local government units and schools. Is the absence of a wide-range and efficient vaccine rollout system in the country their fault? Aside from this, retrofitting facilities would require an additional budget. The call of #LigtasNaBalikEskwela has to be anchored on the state's responsibility to the education sector]

As users urged the government to take action and mobilize the education sector, they also noted what they deemed to be the government's misplaced priorities. In particular, users pointed out the reopening of travel borders and establishments long before plans of reopening schools had been concretized.

Funny how our government prioritizes opening our borders to fully vaccinated foreigners, while our schools here are still closed and the health system is given less precedence. This admin has never been helpful! #LigtasNaBalikEskwela

*Ilang buwan na rin mula noong m**agbukas ang mga** mall, **pasyalan, at iba pang komersyal na gusali pero hindi pa rin maasikaso nang maayos ng inutil na estado yung muling pagbabalik ng mga estudyante sa paaralan***

[It has been months since malls, recreation centers, and commercial buildings reopened but the inutile state still can't work on the reopening of schools.]

Wait *lang*, super hyped *na yung* f2f classes but **where are the concrete plans tho?** *potcha* you can't expect students to return to school in an instant. Going back to school, especially in a pandemic needs months of preparation. *Hindi lang dapat classroom ang retrofitted.* Students also need to prepare financially, especially those who are living in the provinces. If F2F classes is really happening, announce it as early as now. Give us concrete and effective plans. *Ayoko nang maging subject for experiment, nakakapagod.* #LigtasNaBalikEskwela"

[Wait, the f2f classes are already super hyped but where are the concrete plans tho? potcha you can't expect students to return to school in an instant. Going back to school, especially in a pandemic needs months of preparation. Classrooms are not the only ones that should be retrofitted. Students also need to prepare financially, especially those who are living in the provinces. If F2F classes is really happening, announce it as early as now. Give us concrete and effective plans. I do not want to be a subject for experiments anymore, it is tiring.]

Gusto ko lang magpunto: Ang panawagang #LigtasNaBalikEskwela ay hindi lang pagkamit ng pagbabalik ng pisikal na klase at pag-ensure na hindi maging COVID *hotspot ang mga institusyon. Inklusibo nitong binibitbit na dapat ang mga estudyante ay MAY KAKAYAHAN na bumalik rito. Tinitingnan ang mga sosyo-ekonomikong aspeto.* **Buhat ng pandemya, kailangang makita na hindi agaran na lahat ay may pinansyal na kapasidad para sa mga gastusin na kahaharapin. Idagdag pang hindi dapat makompromiso ang kalidad ng edukasyon dahil sa katayuan o kahandaan para sa** LBE.

[I just want to point out: The call for #LigtasNaBalikEskwela is not just about achieving the return of physical classes and ensuring that institutions do not become COVID hotspots. But this should include that students MUST BE ABLE to return to school. The socio-economic aspects must be looked into. Because of the pandemic, it must be seen that not everyone has the financial capacity for the expected expenses. The quality of education should also not be compromised because of [their] status or readiness for LBE.]

The hashtag was also used to call the attention of the national government and amplify the demand for #LigtasNaBalikEskwela.

Grateful to be part of the ambassador in Southern Tagalog region. **Let us strengthens our grasp and maximize our voice to call for a #LigtasNaBalikEskwela** *at Makabagong gobyernong may pakialam para sa atin.* Tayong kabataan ang pag-asa! #LNBEYouthSummit

[Grateful to be part of the ambassador in Southern Tagalog region. Let us strengthens our grasp and maximize our voice

to call for a #LigtasNaBalikEskwela and new government that cares for all of us. We, the youth, are the hope! #LNBEYouthSummit]

Kung puro pag-reiterate lang ng memo *kaya gawin ng* admin despite the clamor, *pwes*, reiterate *din natin mga* calls.

#GenuineAcadBreakNow
#GenuineAcadEaseNow
#SuspendAllDeadlinesNow
#LigtasNaBalikEskwela"

[If the administration can only reiterate memorandums in spite of the clamor, we are better off also reiterating our calls. #GenuineAcadBreakNow
#GenuineAcadEaseNow
#SuspendAllDeadlinesNow
#LigtasNaBalikEskwela]

Lastly, the hashtag was used to promote a presidential candidate in the 2022 elections. From this, we can infer that the user who tweeted the post below was not satisfied with the government's handling of the education sector and hoped that their presidential bet would prioritize the return to face-to-face learning.

GEN MATH *MUNA TAYO TUNGO SA* #LigtasNaBalikEskwela
🧑‍🎓 *Makikita sa* http://lenirobredo.com *ang komprehensibong plano ni* Leni Robredo *tungkol sa kung paano natin matatamasa ang isang ligtas na balik-eskwela ngayong pandemya*. 🌸 #AngatBukas #SHSforLeni #KulayRosasAngBukas

[Let's do General Math towards #LigtasNaBalikEskwela. Leni Robredo's comprehensive plans about how we can attain the safe reopening of schools during the pandemic can be found here: http://lenirobredo.com. #AngatBukas #SHSforLeni #KulayRosasAngBukas]

Overall, #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets that mentioned the government tell us that users viewed remote learning as an issue of national importance that should be addressed by the state.

To conclude, the #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets presented the situation of remote learning in the Philippines through various frames. With one being as

a short-term condition, given the ongoing efforts to get students and teachers back on campus; another being that the remote learning setup is the cause of the worsening mental health conditions of students. Respective studies by Alvarez (2020), Baloran (2020), Baticulon et al. (2021), Gocotano et al. (2021), and Rotas and Cahapay (2020) have all pointed out that students were experiencing mental health struggles considering the current learning modality. Although interpreted in different ways based on how their respective participants shared their mental health struggles, all the aforementioned studies highlighted that mental health issues impacted the motivation of students throughout their remote learning experience.

Criticisms regarding unequal access to learning resources were also observed in #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets. Baticulon et al. 's (2021) study on remote learning found that limited access to optimal gadgets was a common struggle endured by students. Chaves (2021) also pointed out that internet connectivity, as one of the most crucial resources, is one of the top challenges in remote learning. In relation, users also framed the lack of accessibility to tools required for online learning as a violation of the basic right to education. Remote learning was also framed as a necessary means to continue education while minimizing the risk of contracting the virus. However, an even greater number of tweets used the hashtag to discuss remote learning as a result of the government's neglect of the needs of the education sector.

In totality, these discursive frames encapsulated the different perspectives on the condition of remote learning in the Philippines within the past few months. The collective consciousness was achieved through the sharing of commentaries on aspects related to remote learning during the pandemic. Although not all #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets contained text directly related to the topic, those that did mention similar experiences and sentiments strengthened the demand for the safe resumption of in-person learning. Taken from a holistic perspective, netizens framed the issue as a collective struggle. By citing personal experiences and placing them within contexts of the pandemic, mental health, financial and technological disparities, human rights, and the government's pandemic response, users were able to frame their commentaries in a way that other netizens could identify with and, in turn, agree with.

Implications and Recommendations

The study offered insights into how Twitter users formed discourses through the use of #LigtasNaBalikEskwela. As the study attempted to inquire into the ways in which #LigtasNaBalikEskwela was used to construct collective consciousness, one might interpret that this study provided an encompassing

situationer on the call for the safe resumption of physical classes in the Philippines. However, as Bruns and Burgess (2015) pointed out, the tweets in a particular hashtag are constructed. This means that one may only see a partial and curated view of a phenomenon based on the tweets around the hashtag. The tweets can present *a reality*, but that does not mean that they encompass all experiences throughout the phenomenon.

However, the partiality of it does not mean that it cannot capture the situation of remote learning in the Philippines. The hashtag, when taken as material, "contributes to the unfolding of social and political reality" (Sauter & Bruns, 2015). One may see in the tweets shared experiences and interests that were eventually geared through political participation. Users became emancipated through the unfolding of the realities that they experienced and united towards a certain cause.

Since time and actions will inevitably unravel developments of the current situation, we acknowledge that our collection of #LigtasNaBalikEskwela tweets may only capture discourses within a specific time. As such, we hope that further studies will analyze the progress of discourses in remote learning. This way, one may get a bigger picture of how the remote learning situation in the Philippines evolved through time.

On a theoretical level, we hope that hashtag studies may utilize Durkheim's collective consciousness which, we believe, can be further explored within the current new media landscape. As new media platforms such as social networking sites allow users to interconnect regardless of geographical location, we recommend that future studies explore the formation of collective consciousness on a cross-cultural level.

The findings of this study revealed the experiences and calls of the education sector toward the #LigtasNaBalikEskwela campaign. On a practical level, we address the education sector to be united in the call for a safe return to physical classes. We call on administrators of educational institutions to engage in a dialogue that would help them come up with a concrete plan of action as we proceed to the reopening of physical classes. In addition, we also call on policymakers to continue with their efforts to achieve a genuinely safe reopening of schools.

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