Investigating Students' Online Self-Regulated Learning Skills and Their E-Learning Experience in a Prophetic Communication Course

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ABSTRACT

Prophetic communication (PC) is an Islamic perspective with which to view everyday communication phenomena. While there are currently many negative aspects to the use of social media and the internet, online learning is highly useful for supporting the PC learning process—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the current pandemic, online learning was typically conducted in a blended manner with face-to-face meetings. However, this shifted during the pandemic, and PC learning was undertaken entirely online. Since the students themselves are one of the success factors of online learning implementation, it is important to examine the students' self-regulated learning skills in an online PC course throughout the semester. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from four classes. Data analyses were also conducted to address the research aim. The findings revealed that, overall, students apply self-regulated online learning skills. However, improvement and facilitation are still needed to enhance evaluation skills. From the qualitative data gathered, we constructed and categorized several themes into positive learning experiences, challenges, online learning strategies, and suggestions with which to improve online class management.

1. INTRODUCTION

Prophetic Communication (PC) is a mandatory course of the Communication Science Study Program at some Islamic universities in Indonesia. PC is a perspective with which to view everyday communication phenomena [1] and can briefly be defined as "Apostolic Communication." It does not only mean "communication that imitates the" prophetic procedures "in communicating," or "Islamic preaching" or "Islamic communication," but rather transcends this to mean communication that seeks to "imitate the prophetic goals" [2]. PC cannot be separated from Kuntowijoyo's [3] notion of Social Prophetic Science, which functions as a paradigm, or perspective, based on certain ethical goals and uses a prophetic spirit. According to Kuntowijoyo, the spirit or ethos of prophecy is represented by humanization, liberation, and transcendence [3].

Within the course, students are taught to understand PC's concepts, its value or ethos, as well as communication ethics in the Qur'an and Hadith (two major sources of Islam). The various fundamental concepts are then used to analyze the communication phenomenon, such as using the principles of PC in community empowerment and the defense of the weak. The practice of analyzing PC is related to the concept of empowerment.

Online learning is highly useful for supporting the PC learning process, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Online learning before the global pandemic was often blended with face-to-face meetings. However, the current situation has resulted in all PC learning occurring entirely online. Online learning was used in all meetings during odd semester 2020/2021, September–December 2020, both synchronously and asynchronously.

Implementing online learning in the PC course has both limitations and challenges. Various online learning have been implemented using various technologies, such as cloud service [4]. Online learning is frequently perceived as a mere transfer of knowledge. Cultivating character and values is a challenge. Achieving these learning goals in the context of online distance learning brought forward a need of developing students' Self-Regulated Online Learning (SROL) skills. The SROL skills are needed for enabling the students of PC course to actively regulate their learning activities (i.e., planning when to review the learning materials, monitoring learning achievements, etc.) However, developing such skills through online learning is also a challenge in itself. In this case, the challenge lies in fostering students' ability to learn independently and encouraging them to apply the gained knowledge in everyday life. In essence, it is not enough to simply know of Islamic teachings. They must be practiced, then preached.

The students' SROL skills must be evaluated in order to check their development. In addition, it would be necessary to study student and lecturer perspectives, especially during a pandemic. Two research questions (RQ) guide the current study:

(1) What are the students' perceptions regarding their self-regulated online learning skills?

(2) What are the students' opinions regarding the learning experiences while engaged in the online Prophetic Communication course?

By addressing the RQs, the contributions of this study are

twofold. Firstly. it described the communication students' perception on their SROL skills and views regarding their online learning experience. Some challenges were further outlined based on the findings. Secondly, this study described and analyzed the dynamics of students' online learning experience across the course delivery timeframe.

2. RELEVANT LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Prophetic communication

Prophetic communication is a course within communication studies from an Islamic perspective. Yusof [5] asserts that communication theory should be developed according to social, cultural, and religious contexts. Upon this fundamental basis, Islam differs conceptually from much Western thought. Mowlana [6] argues that there are five fundamental aspects to Islam's ethical basis for communication: (1) tauḥīd (monotheism); (2) amr bi al-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar (enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong); (3) umma (the whole community of Muslims); (4) taqwā (God consciousness); and (5) amāna (trustworthiness).

Kasmani et al. [7] elaborates upon the Islamic paradigm of communication and offers an alternative—highly useful for communication scholars—characterized by the integration of knowledge on the basis of naqlī (the Qur'an and Hadith) and 'aqlī (the human mind). Thus, the Islamic communication paradigm develops a dialogical-dialectical awareness of the model and theory of communication known today.

PC also learns the principles of communication that are explored from the perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith as a source of Islamic teachings [8]. Afifi and Suparno [9] explain the ethical principles in the Qur'an, including some which involve communication sources/communicators (source), message recipients (receivers), and the messages themselves. Afifi and Kurniawan [10] assert that the Qur'an mentions several terms concerning verbal communication ethics, such as *Qaulan Sadidan* (right words), *Qaulan Ma'rufan* (honorable words), *Qaulan Maysuran* (easy and gentle words), *Qaulan Kariman* (noble and respectful words), *Qaulan Balighan* (profound and effective words), and *Qaulan Layyinan* (gentle words).

PC can be understood as an effort in practice and communication theory that aims to perform prophetic social functions for humanity (humanization) and provide greater freedoms (liberation) and servitude to God (transcendence) [2]. There are at least four Islamic perspectives in communication studies: (1) Islamic preaching communication, (2) Islamic communication, (3) Islam as a communication context, and (4) Prophetic communication [2].

PC presents a different perspective to Islamic preaching, Islamic communication, and Islam as a communication context. It can be seen as a paradigm with ethical-philosophical dimensions which contain certain key concepts. First, its ethos is one of humanization, liberation, and transcendence. Second, it holds there to be critical meaning in every act of communication and views it from a critical perspective.

Scholars have studied PC from various perspectives. Khalil [11] defines Islam as a communicative religion. Hak et al. [12] elaborated humanization, liberation, and transcendence as PC behaviors and key standards for freedom of expression on social media. They examine the influence of media literacy and information behavior on the practice of PC lecturers at a university level. Their study argues there to be a strong relationship between media literacy, information behavior, and the practice of PC (i.e., humanization, liberation, and transcendence). Similar studies have been conducted by Usman et al. [13], Rakhmawati [14], Jamilin et al. [15], and Jaafar et al. [16].

2.2 Self-regulated online learning skills

The success of conducting courses—especially online—is determined by the student's participation and their ability to learn independently. This ability is related to student self-regulated learning (SRL) skills. The concept of SRL emerged from the notion of self-regulation, which is defined as personal thoughts, feelings, and actions that are self-generated, planned, and adapted to attain personal goals [17].

Several models with different constructs or components have been proposed to describe SRL. For example, one of SRL's pioneers, Zimmerman [17], proposed a cyclical model that includes the following three self-regulatory phases: (1) forethought; (2) performance or volitional control; and (3) self-reflection. Pintrich [18] provided another model which focused on three categories of strategies, namely: (1) cognitive strategies; (2) strategies to control cognition; and (3) resource management strategies.

Studies have shown the importance of SRL skills for effective online learning. For instance, Barak, et al. [19] showed that two components of SRL, the cognitive strategies, and regulation of cognition, significantly affect the success of online learning. There were evidences that students with high self-regulation skills were easier to master the use of online tools and learn independently [20, 21]. Furthermore, students' self-regulation was found to be one of the factors influencing learning behaviour [22]. Another study conducted in online distance learning found that SRL-competent students were more intrinsically motivated, procrastinated less, and were more able to handle challenges [23]. Thus, student SRL skills must be continuously honed and used. Accordingly, lecturers need information on the extent to which students are using these skills.

Generally speaking, there are two approaches to viewing students' SRL skills: the self-report and observation approach. Regarding the former, several instruments have been developed by SRL researchers (e.g., Arbiyah, & Triatmoko [24]; Lawanto and Santoso [25]; Santoso et al. [26]; and Zalli et al. [27]). This study employed an instrument developed by Arbiyah and Triatmoko [24] to measure students' SRL skills.

2.3 Online teaching and learning during a pandemic

During the pandemic, educators resorted to adopting various distance learning strategies. A review by Camargo et al. [28] into distance learning during an epidemic- or pandemic-related school closures reported the widespread use of live and pre-recorded class sessions using such varied methods as lectures, flipped classrooms, problem-based learning, case method, and forum discussions. Moreover, a case study in the context of higher education institutions found there to be increasing interest in using video technology in distance learning [29].

Several challenges and opportunities have been identified for online teaching and learning during a pandemic. The challenges include: (1) unequal access to necessary technology;

(2) distraction from intrusions; (3) digital competence gaps; (4) e-learning competence gaps; (5) heavy workloads; (6) changes to management issues; and (7) compatibility of online learning with certain educational fields [30, 31]. However, several opportunities were also found, such as (1) research innovations for improving online learning delivery; (2) technological innovations for improving the online learning experience; and (3) socio-economic interventions [31]. Moreover, the adoption of distance learning during the pandemic could serve to accelerate the digitalization of higher education institutions [29].

3. THE METHOD

3.1 Research design

This study used a sequential mixed-methods approach [32]. Quantitative data were collected first using questionnaires. Online questionnaires were prepared and distributed at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the semester. The qualitative data were collected afterward. Qualitative data were gathered and analyzed using thematic analysis.

3.2 Participants and research context

The study's participants were 124 students enrolled in Prophetic Communication at the Communication Science Department, Fakultas Psikologi dan Ilmu Sosial Budaya (FPSB), Universitas Islam Indonesia (UII), Odd semester Year 2020/2021. Participation in this study was voluntary. The students were explained that they can quit any time from their participation in the study. The selected sampling method was convenience sampling. They were divided into four classes, consisting of three regular classes (i.e., the lectures were delivered in Indonesian) and one international class (in which the lectures were delivered in English). 28 students took Class C (regular); 32 took Class D (regular); 46 took Class E (regular); and 18 took Class IP (international).

3.3 Instruments

We used an SROL scale in the study [24] to assess users' perception of their learning experience in Prophetic Communication classes at the Universitas Islam Indonesia. The original questionnaire (in Bahasa) was adapted into English. The adaptation involved an expert in online learning and SRL in a higher education context with experience of over ten years. Moreover, open-ended questions were conducted to collect additional information regarding online learning challenges, learning experiences, and suggestions for the future class implementation.

3.4 Data collection procedures

Data were collected through an online questionnaire and open-ended questions from October 2020 to December 2020. The research questions were addressed using the data sources specified in Table 1. The instructor explained the study to the students at the beginning of the semester. A limited number of rewards were prepared and given to the participants who completed all questionnaires at the end of the semester.

Table 1. Research questions and data sources

Research Questions	Data Sources
What are the students' perceptions regarding their self-regulated online learning skills?	Data from Self-Regulated Online Learning Scale
What are the students' opinions regarding the learning experiences while engaged in the online Prophetic Communication course?	Data from open-ended questions

3.5 Data analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis. Data were collected at three different times: at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester, using both the SROL scale questionnaire and open-ended questions. We used the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA to analyze the participants' answers to the open-ended questions. Table 2 specifies the data analysis approaches.

Table 2. Data analysis

Data Collected	Analysis
Questionnaire (SROL Scale)	Descriptive Statistics
Open-Ended Questions	Qualitative Content Analysis

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section will present the findings obtained to answer the two research questions. Before explaining and discussing the findings, the demographic information of the respondents is presented. 124 students participated in the study.

4.1 Addressing research question 1: what are the students' perceptions regarding their self-regulated online learning skills?

To address the first research question, the students were asked to answer the 24-item online questionnaire. Each item was categorized into environment structuring, goal-setting, help-seeking, self-evaluation, task strategies, and time. Table 3 presents the result of each questionnaire item. Although the students reported their high performance in all questionnaire items, evaluation strategies while engaging in online classes require further examination. Since evaluation skills are important to the learning process, lecturers can use this finding to identify additional strategies with which to increase student skills.

The results of the analysis of the questionnaire in three phases (i.e., the beginning, middle, and end of the semester) showed that the participants overwhelmingly agreed on 21 out of 24 items. However, there were two points of difference in student tendencies in items 17 (tend to disagree—tend to agree—tend to disagree; in this case almost equal) and 19 (tend to disagree—tend to agree—tend to agree). Regarding item 22, students in Phases 1 and 2 showed a tendency to agree, while the number of students in Phase 3 who tended to agree and disagree was the same.

Table 3. The findings from the self-regulated online learning scale

#	Statements	The tendency of student perception in one semester (1–3 vs. 4–6)		
		Beginning of the semester	Middle of the semester	End of the semester
1	*I can choose the right study location in the online learning session to avoid too many distractions.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.43; *SM* = 1.18	*M* = 4.66; *SD* = 1.19	*M* = 4.59; *SD* = 1.19
2	*I close all tabs or windows unrelated to the course material while taking online lessons.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.22; *SD* = 1.32	*M* = 3.95; *SD* = 1.32	*M* = 3.99; *SD* = 1.14
3	*I know where I can study most effectively for the online course.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.70; *SD* = 1.11	*M* = 4.73; *SD* = 1.15	*M* = 4.59; *SD* = 1.06
4	*I choose the study time with the least amount of distractions in the online course.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.56; *SD* = 1.07	*M* = 4.55; *SD* = 1.12	*M* = 4.35; *SD* = 1.13
5	*I set targets for the completion of my assignments in the online course.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.55; *SD* = 1.05	*M* = 4.66; *SD* = 1.11	*M* = 4.33; *SD* = 1.12
6	*I set short-term course goals (daily or weekly) that I want to achieve.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.31; *SD* = 1.04	*M* = 4.19; *SD* = 1.15	*M* = 4.24; *SD* = 1.05
7	*I set high standards for my learning in the online course.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.53; *SD* = 0.96	*M* = 4.19; *SD* = 1.08	*M* = 4.20; *SD* = 0.99
8	*I set long-term course goals (monthly or semester) that I want to achieve.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.41; *SD* = 0.98	*M* = 4.19; *SD* = 1.05	*M* = 4.25; *SD* = 1.06
9	*I know who to ask if I encounter difficulties while studying in the online course.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.63; *SD* = 1.11	*M* = 4.70; *SD* = 1.08	*M* = 4.50; *SD* = 1.23
10	*I asked other people who have taken online lectures about how to effectively study in the online course.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.19; *SD* = 1.27	*M* = 4.01; *SD* = 1.29	*M* = 4.18; *SD* = 1.25
11	*I contacted classmates in my online course when I encountered learning difficulties.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 5.09; *SD* = 1.00	*M* = 5.02; *SD* = 1.03	*M* = 4.85; *SD* = 1.18
12	*I share problems encountered in the online course with classmates so that we know what problems we are experiencing together and how to solve them.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.69; *SD* = 1.21	*M* = 4.73; *SD* = 1.27	*M* = 4.72; *SD* = 1.22
13	*I evaluate the extent to which I understand the learning material in the online course I take.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.52; *SD* = 0.93	*M* = 4.30; *SD* = 0.92	*M* = 4.28; *SD* = 1.00
14	*I communicate with my classmates to find out if my understanding differs from theirs.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.63; *SD* = 1.03	*M* = 4.59; SD= 1.20	*M* = 4.56; *SD* = 1.18
15	*I evaluate whether the learning strategy I use can achieve the targets I have set at the beginning of the online course.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.35; *SD* = 1.06	*M* = 4.24; *SD* = 0.97	*M* = 4.22; *SD* = 1.09
16	*In the middle of the semester, I again reflected again on the suitability of my online learning strategies.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.36; *SD* = 1.00	*M* = 4.23; *SD* = 0.94	*M* = 4.17; *SD* = 0.99
17	*I do not have a specific strategy for completing assignments in an online course.*	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree (almost equal)
		M = 3.49; *SD* = 1.43	*M* = 3.50; *SD* = 1.40	*M* = 3.50; *SD* = 1.34
18	*I made strategies for completing assignments in an online course.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.24; *SD* = 1.07	*M* = 4.25; *SD* = 1.17	*M* = 4.19; *SD* = 1.16
19	*I prepare questions that I will ask before joining discussion forums or chat rooms.*	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 3.50; *SD* = 1.15	*M* = 3.66; *SD* = 1.11	*M* = 3.72; *SD* = 1.21
20	*I do additional things in the online course other than those assigned to me in order to master the lecture material.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 3.70; *SD* = 1.16	*M* = 3.69; *SD* = 1.17	*M* = 3.83; *SD* = 1.11
21	*I allocate additional study time for online lectures because I know that the learning course requires proper timing.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.05; *SD* = 1.08	*M* = 3.86; *SD* =1.27	*M* = 3.97; *SD* = 1.12
22	*There is no specific time that I allocate for studying in online lectures.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	EQUAL
		M = 3.41; *SD* = 1.22	*M* = 3.74; *SD* = 1.37	*M* = 3.54; *SD* = 1.33
23	*I calculated the number of study hours I would allocate each week to the online course.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 3.98; *SD* =1.01	*M* = 3.98; *SD* = 1.22	*M* = 4.04; *SD* =1.09
24	*I set the same schedule every day or every week for studying in the online course.*	Tend to agree	Tend to agree	Tend to agree
		M = 4.08; *SD* = 1.07	*M* = 3.94; *SD* =1.24	*M* = 4.14; *SD* =1.14

4.2 Addressing research question 2: What are the students' opinions regarding the learning experience while engaged in the online PC course?

To address the second research question, several open-ended questions were provided to the students related to the positivity of their learning experience, the challenges of learning online, and their suggestions for improving the online class. The results of the open-ended questions are presented in the following subsections.

4.2.1 Student's memorable learning experience
Figure 1 shows several themes related to students' learning experience across Phases 1, 2, and 3. First, nothing is interesting—27 students at the beginning of the semester reported finding nothing interesting in the online learning sessions. This number then decreased to only seven students, from which we can infer that they encountered positive learning experiences. Second, enjoyable learning experiences—seven students reported that the learning sessions were fun. This number increased to 15 by the end of the semester. Third, interesting learning—this third theme is

in line with the first and second. Fourth, experiencing the learning methods—this is an intriguing theme.

4.2.2 Challenges faced by students when participating in the online PC class
Over time, students shared the new challenges they faced, meaning that the themes of the challenges in Phase 3 were more varied compared to Phase 1. However, common issues that arose related to (1) internet connection; (2) understanding the materials; (3) workload assignment; and (4) distractions during class participation. The themes related to challenges in learning online are shown in Figure 2.

The problem of internet connection remained the most prevalent issue across all phases and became increasingly reported as the course progressed. Furthermore, distractions, staying focused, and boredom also emerged in the latter two phases. This finding is consistent with those of recent studies on emergency distance learning [33-35] that cited distraction as a problem experienced by distance learners. Such losses of focus could lead to cyber-slacking, which would likely affect a student's performance. Lack of attention has been found to influence students' intention to be distracted, slack, and engage in unrelated activities [36].
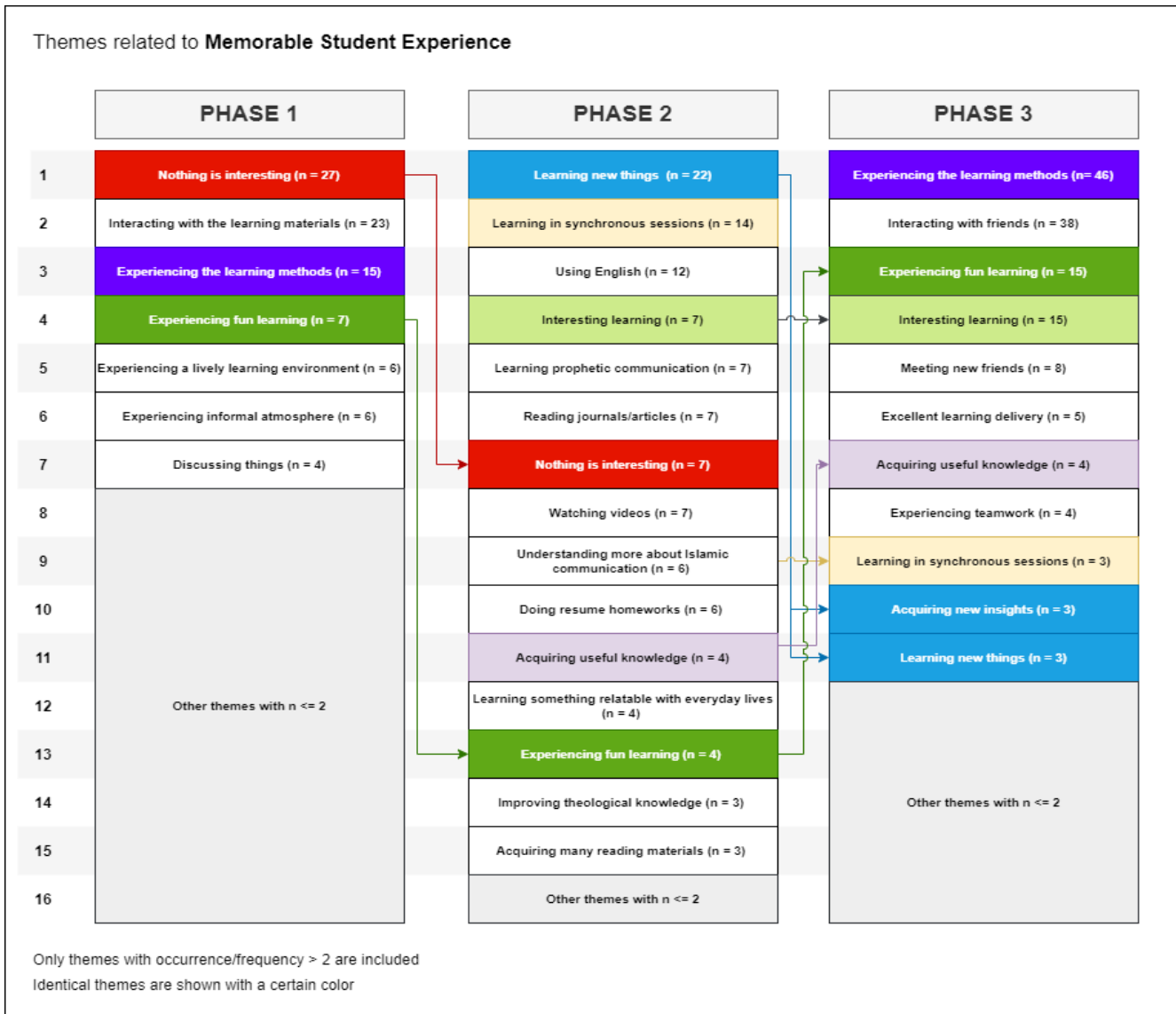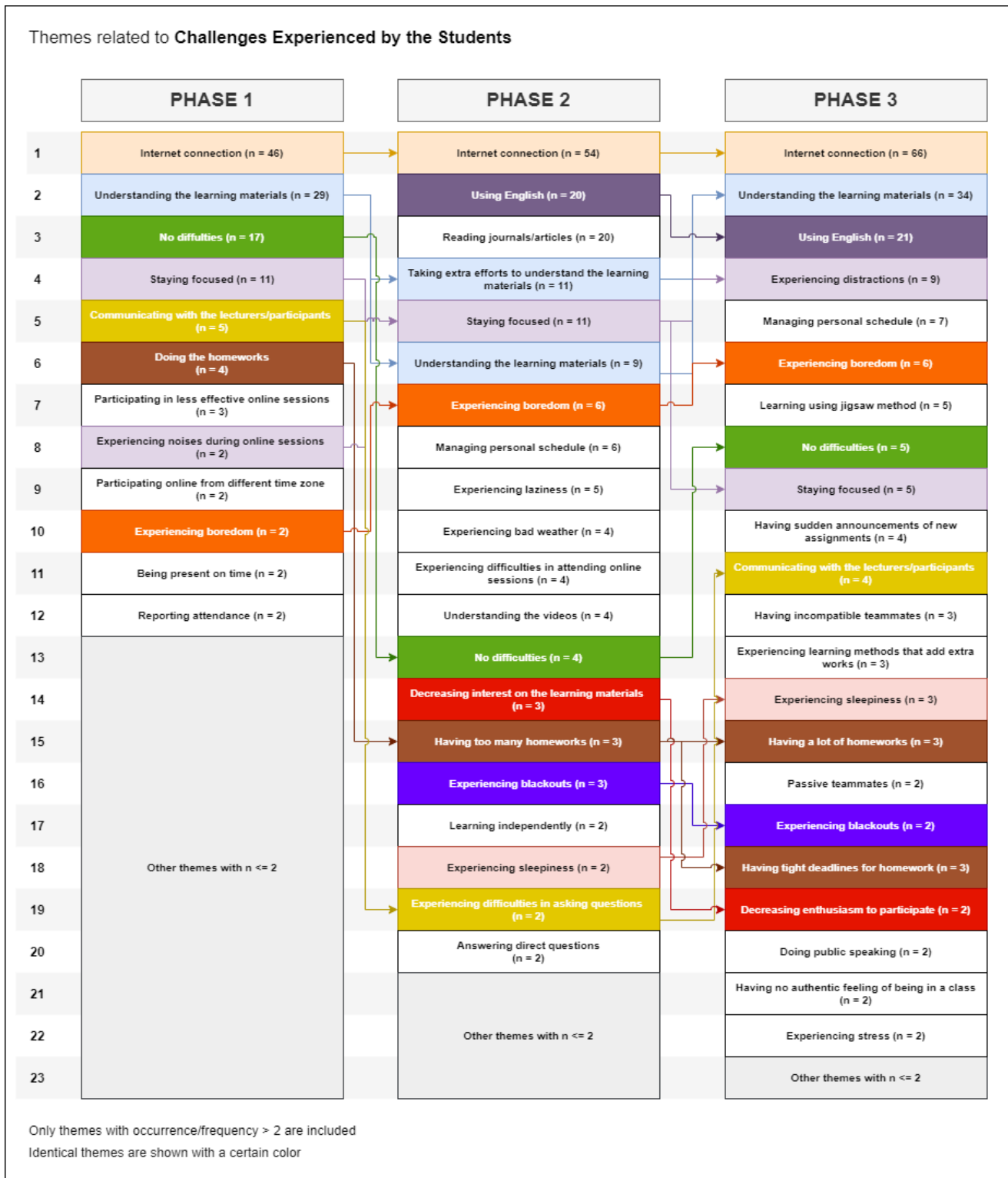

Figure 1. Themes related to the memorable student experience

Themes related to **Challenges Experienced by the Students**

	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
1	Internet connection (n = 46)	Internet connection (n = 54)	Internet connection (n = 66)
2	Understanding the learning materials (n = 29)	Using English (n = 20)	Understanding the learning materials (n = 34)
3	No diffulties (n = 17)	Reading journals/articles (n = 20)	Using English (n = 21)
4	Staying focused (n = 11)	Taking extra efforts to understand the learning materials (n = 11)	Experiencing distractions (n = 9)
5	Communicating with the lecturers/participants (n = 5)	Staying focused (n = 11)	Managing personal schedule (n = 7)
6	Doing the homeworks (n = 4)	Understanding the learning materials (n = 9)	Experiencing boredom (n = 6)
7	Participating in less effective online sessions (n = 3)	Experiencing boredom (n = 6)	Learning using jigsaw method (n = 5)
8	Experiencing noises during online sessions (n = 2)	Managing personal schedule (n = 6)	No difficulties (n = 5)
9	Participating online from different time zone (n = 2)	Experiencing laziness (n = 5)	Staying focused (n = 5)
10	Experiencing boredom (n = 2)	Experiencing bad weather (n = 4)	Having sudden announcements of new assignments (n = 4)
11	Being present on time (n = 2)	Experiencing difficulties in attending online sessions (n = 4)	Communicating with the lecturers/participants (n = 4)
12	Reporting attendance (n = 2)	Understanding the videos (n = 4)	Having incompatible teammates (n = 3)
13		No difficulties (n = 4)	Experiencing learning methods that add extra works (n = 3)
14		Decreasing interest on the learning materials (n = 3)	Experiencing sleepiness (n = 3)
15		Having too many homeworks (n = 3)	Having a lot of homeworks (n = 3)
16	Other themes with n <= 2	Experiencing blackouts (n = 3)	Passive teammates (n = 2)
17		Learning independently (n = 2)	Experiencing blackouts (n = 2)
18		Experiencing sleepiness (n = 2)	Having tight deadlines for homework (n = 3)
19		Experiencing difficulties in asking questions (n = 2)	Decreasing enthusiasm to participate (n = 2)
20		Answering direct questions (n = 2)	Doing public speaking (n = 2)
21			Having no authentic feeling of being in a class (n = 2)
22		Other themes with n <= 2	Experiencing stress (n = 2)
23			Other themes with n <= 2

Only themes with occurrence/frequency > 2 are included
Identical themes are shown with a certain color

Figure 2. Themes related to challenges experienced by the students

Table 4. Common Issues/challenges Encountered by the Students

Common issues/challenges	Samples of related student's comments
Internet connection	"In taking online lessons, sometimes *my signal or network is unstable*. Besides that, sometimes I also don't understand the material conveyed by the lecturers."
Understanding the materials the online Prophetic Communication course	"In general, all material in online learning *is quite difficult for my brain to digest*, so it requires extra effort to understand better. This will also happen for the subject of PC."
Assignment workloads	"*Much homework* … due to online classes [method], there is more homework. It's quite burdening."
Distractions	"My focus is easily distracted in online portals. Staying at home makes me want to do other things after class to ease my boredom."

Apart from internet connection issues and distractions, the students also expressed difficulties in completing their homework due to the heavy workloads in the latter phases of the course. This workload-related problem has also been found in emergency distance learning, in which the students complained about the content and time of assignments [34]. Furthermore, the participants also reported difficulties in understanding the materials in the latter two phases.

The problems related to internet connections, understanding the materials, assignment workloads, and distractions were reflected in students' comments. Examples of some student comments are presented in Table 4.

4.2.3 Learning strategies are generally used by students to successfully follow the online PC course

The general strategies for students in Phases 1–3 are: (1) reviewing the material; (2) recording the material; (3) reading the material; and (4) independently exploring the material on the internet. as time passed, the themes describing student learning strategies became more diverse and concrete. Themes showing collaboration (e.g., learning with friends [Phase 2, n = 8], and collaborating with friends [Phase 3, n = 6]) appeared more frequently in Phases 2 and 3 compared to Phase 1. In Phase 1, more themes regarding learning preparation (e.g., preparing before studying [n = 14]) appeared than in Phases 2 and 3. The below figure displays the themes related to students' learning strategies.

Figure 3. Themes related to students' learning strategies

**Table 5.** General strategies adopted by the students

Common issues/challenges	Samples of related student's comments
Reviewing the material	"Repeating and asking for materials from friends because I find it difficult to understand the material online." "Additional learning and evaluating understanding …"
Recording the material	I recorded and took notes as much as I need … but it is not very frequent."
Reading the Material	"It's more about how we master the material. So we can *read the literature* that has been suggested by our lecturers, and then we can also study the material that will be discussed at the next meeting. And we can also repeat the material we got in the evening."
Exploring the material independently on the internet	"Read the material that has been provided by the lecturer or *look for additional material on Google* to increase knowledge."

As shown in Figure 3, students' learning strategies became more diverse as the course progressed. Learning strategies such as watching videos, more deeply exploring the materials, learning at a slower pace, and learning in informal settings appeared in the latter phases of the course. Some themes presented in Figure 3 are related to certain challenges shown in Figure 2. For example, reading and reviewing the materials was one of the most prevalent strategies undertaken by the student across all phases.

The prevalent strategies of reviewing, recording, reading, and independently exploring the material on the internet are reflected in the students' comments, examples of which are displayed in Table 5.

4.2.4 Suggestions related to the implementation of future online PC courses

In Phases 2 and 3, most students felt that their learning was sufficiently good so as not to require "major" improvement input. Suggestions that were commonly expressed by students in Phases 1–3 concerned: (1) relief of assignments; (2) more face-to-face/synchronous sessions; and (3) making lecture delivery interesting (or not boring). Student recommendations regarding the easing of workloads in terms of time and content and the call for increasing face-to-face teaching interactions have also been reported in Bdair's study into emergency online distance learning [34]. The themes related to students' overall suggestions can be read in Figure 4.
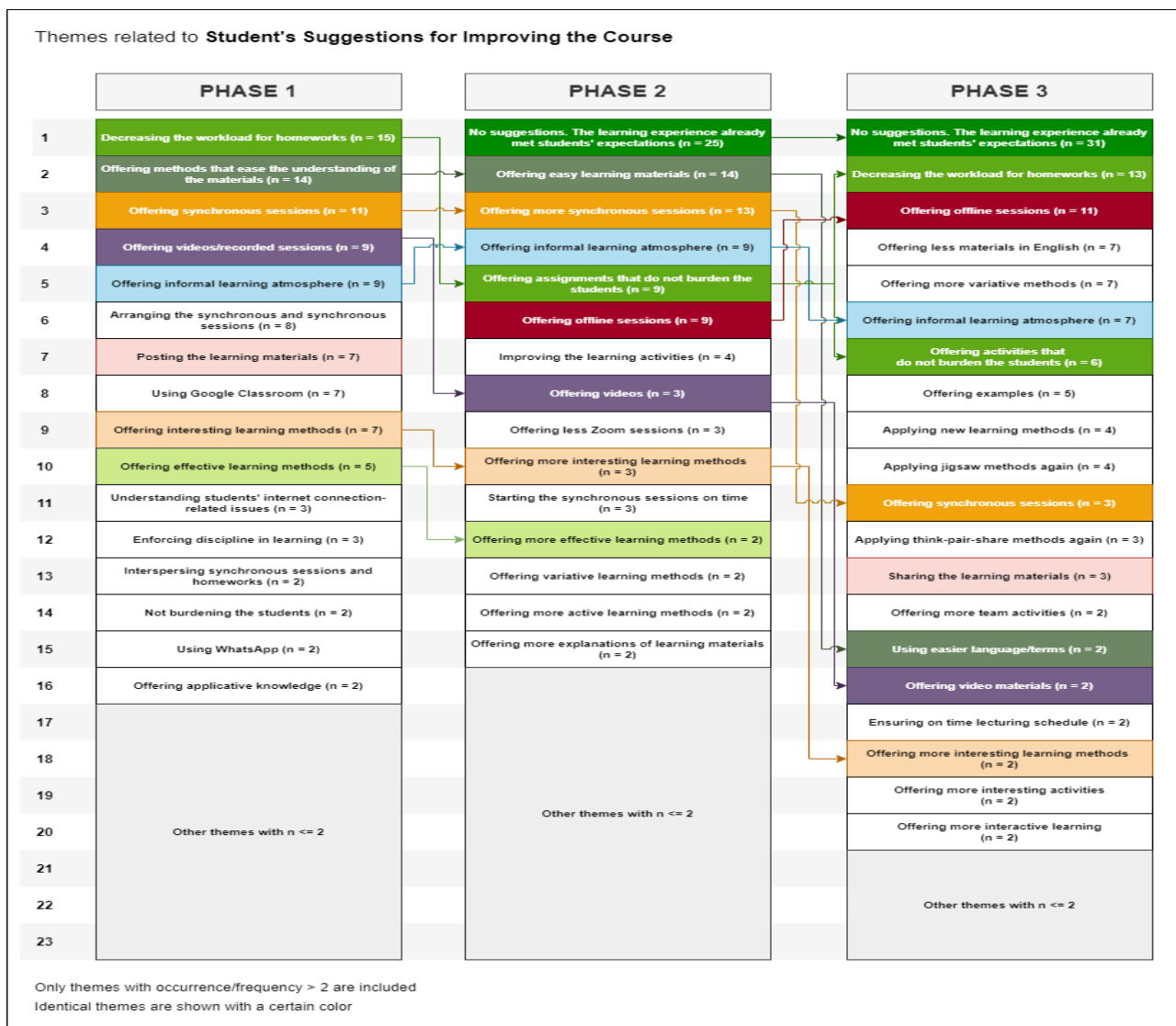
Figure 4. Themes related to students' suggestions to improve the course

Table 6. Suggestions by the Students

Main points of suggestions	Samples of related student's comments
Easing of workloads	"I hope next time there will be *not so many assignments* to analyze articles." "[I want] a more relaxed learning atmosphere with *not so many assignments*."
Implementing/increasing face-to-face teaching	"I hope for the better *face-to-face lectures*."
Making lectures more interesting to mitigate boredom	"[Make it] *more interesting* so that we are not bored."

As can be seen in the above figure, students called for a return to traditional face-to-face classrooms as the course progressed in Phases 2 and 3. However, while the majority stated that the learning experience provided by the emergency online distance learning had met student expectations, such calls for face-to-face classes are indicative of there being challenges or pain points which some believed could be eased by a return to traditional teaching methods. In short, there was an indication that some students preferred implementing the face-to-face method compared to online distance learning in a PC course.

The suggestions predominantly related to easing the workload, implementing face-to-face teaching, and making the learning experience more interesting. Table 6 provides examples of students' comments.

Students also conveyed further suggestions regarding other aspects of online learning (i.e., its technical side, etc.). The following are some examples of other student suggestions:

"I think assignments like résumés or writing essays are much more effective individually than groups, sir. If it's a group assignment, it's probably just a related presentation. It's not that I don't want to be in groups, but often some students don't know themselves and don't feel responsible for joint assignments, but instead expect the appropriate grades."

"It's more fun. Learning is taken casually but seriously."

The findings from the open-ended questions are in line with certain findings from the SROL scale questionnaires and prior studies. For examples, the issue of increasing workloads and communication-related problems were also reported in a cross-cultural descriptive study by Yaseen et al. [37].

Based on Table 6, some participants agreed that they evaluated the extent of their understanding of the course's learning material (item 13) throughout all three phases. This was further confirmed by the themes which arose in the open-ended questions (see Figure 3) regarding evaluating their understanding of the learning material.

Furthermore, Table 6 also shows that the participants were almost equally divided into those who had a specific learning strategy and those who did not. This is shown by the results from item 17. This is also reflected in the results of the open-ended questions (see Figure 3), wherein some students reported not having a particular learning strategy.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study has explored the perspectives of undergraduate students regarding their self-regulated learning abilities when taking an online course in Prophetic Communication course. The results showed that students used their self-regulated learning abilities effectively. That said, we would still recommend that further attention should be paid to their evaluation strategies.

In addition to the findings from the questionnaires, themes were constructed: memorable learning experiences, challenges in online learning, strategies for online distance learning, and suggestions for improving the quality of future class delivery

and administration. The online learning challenges reported by the students include internet connection; understanding the materials; level of workload; and distractions while participating in learning sessions. To address such challenges, approximately half of the students stated having the following strategies: reviewing the material; recording the material; reading the material; and independently exploring the material online. However, the remaining half reported having no particular learning strategy.

Finally, based on the current research findings future works include: different online instructional designs and active learning strategies. Online collaborative learning and problem-based learning strategies are important to be explored in the Prophetic Communication course. Due to the need of post-pandemic strategies, teaching and learning scenarios in a blended learning format will also be beneficial.

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