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Challenges of Students in the Era of Academic Disruption: The Case of a College in The Philippines

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ABSTRACT The abrupt shift to online and flexible learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored both opportunities and persistent challenges in higher education. This study investigated the experiences of undergraduate students in a state college in the Philippines, within the policies of the Commission on Higher Education involving n=1,558 undergraduate students. Focusing on barriers such as unstable internet access, limited digital infrastructure, overwhelming workloads, and insufficient feedback practices. Using a quantitative design supported by interviews, the research highlights how inequitable access, technological limitations, and heavy academic demands contribute to stress, disengagement, and reduced learning motivation. Findings reveal that online education cannot succeed by relying solely on digital device ownership or content delivery, rather, requiring supportive structures, dialogic feedback, and learner-centred approaches that balance rigour with student well-being. Addressing infrastructure gaps, refining assessment practices, and fostering social presence emerge as crucial strategies for ensuring equitable and meaningful participation in flexible learning environments.