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How did Teachers and Students Experience a Hybrid Learning model in Costa Rian Higher Education?

¿Cómo experimentaron los docentes y estudiantes un modelo de aprendizaje híbrido en la Educación Superior en Costa Rica?

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ABSTRACT

While much attention has been focused on hybrid learning studies in Higher Education, teachers and students continue playing a crucial role in teaching and learning outcomes. This article presents a study on the experiences of students and teachers in the implementation of a hybrid learning model in higher education. A qualitative method was used, including focus groups with students, who were selected voluntarily or based on accessibility, and interviews with teachers from the same faculty. These participants provided feedback on their experiences with face-to-face and virtual learning, as well as suggestions for improvement. A total of 107 students participated in the focus groups, and 7 teachers were interviewed, representing Law, English Teaching and Early Childhood Education programs from a university in Costa Rica. The findings reveal that participants expressed satisfaction with the model due to its flexibility in attending classes either in person or virtually. They also reported positive outcomes related to recorded lessons as pedagogical support, innovation and development of interactive strategies facilitating the acquisition of new skills among students. The implemented model positively impacted retention rated by providing flexibility and underscored the importance of teachers' adjustments to promote dynamic and active learning. However, clear opportunities for improvement were identified, including course scheduling to avoid conflicts with other courses, workload management, improve UbD´s backward design process, low participation in discussions, and lack of effective feedback from teachers.

KEYWORDS: Hybrid Learning, Higher Education, Instructional Design, Learning Experience.

RESUMEN

A pesar de que gran atención se ha centrado en estudios sobre el aprendizaje híbrido en la Educación Superior, el profesorado y alumnado siguen desempeñando un papel crucial en los resultados de la enseñanza y aprendizaje. Este artículo presenta un estudio sobre las experiencias de ambos grupos en la implementación de un modelo de aprendizaje híbrido en la educación superior. Se utilizó un método cualitativo que incluyó grupos focales con el alumnado, quienes fueron seleccionados de forma voluntaria o por la accesibilidad, y entrevistas al cuerpo docente que impartía cursos de una misma facultad, quienes brindaron retroalimentación sobre su experiencia de aprendizaje presencial y virtual, así como sugerencias para la mejora. Participaron 107 personas estudiantes en los grupos focales y se entrevistó a 7 personas docentes, los cuales representaban las carreras de Derecho, Enseñanza del Inglés y Educación Preescolar en una universidad en Costa Rica. Los hallazgos revelan que las personas participantes mostraron satisfacción con el modelo debido la flexibilidad para asistir a clases de manera presencial o virtual. También reportaron resultados positivos relacionados con las lecciones grabadas como apoyo pedagógico, la innovación y desarrollo de estrategias interactivas que facilitaron la adquisición de nuevas habilidades en el estudiantado. El modelo aplicado contribuyó

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a las tasas de retención como resultado de la flexibilidad brindada y destaca además la necesidad de que el cuerpo docente realizara ajustes para un aprendizaje dinámico y activo. Sin embargo, se identificaron claras oportunidades de mejora en aspectos como la programación de cursos para evitar conflictos entre otros cursos del estudiantado, la gestión de la carga de trabajo, un mejor manejo del marco de diseño al revés, la baja participación en discusiones y la falta de retroalimentación efectiva de parte del profesorado.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Aprendizaje híbrido, Educación superior, Diseño instruccional, Experiencia de aprendizaje.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education has recently developed a significant transformation with the adoption of hybrid learning models, which combine face-to-face and virtual instruction. These models present both opportunities and challenges for teachers and students. Studies on the hybrid learning environment (HLE) define them as a combination of face-to-face and virtual strategies supported by digital resources and technological platforms (Havens et al., 2020; Pavlidou et al., 2021). In addition to defining the term, existing research highlights the evolving role of students and teachers, the nature of their interactions, evaluation methods, and the importance of timely feedback (Carranza et al., 2021). As part of emerging pedagogies (Lira López & Uribe López, 2022), HLE promotes changes in teaching practices by leveraging digital tools that enable diverse methodological strategies and foster collaboration between educators and learners. For example, Palau & Santiago (2021) emphasized that while the presence of digital devices and tools can enhance the experience, the key lies in engaging students through innovative, problem-solving approaches related to the learning content.

To further clarify the concept of hybridity, Cabero-Almenara and Cejudo (2023) and Melcher et al., (2025) argue that hybrid learning involves more than simply alternating between physical and virtual settings. It requires the development of adaptive strategies that ensure student engagement, significant experiences, continuity and take advantage of the strengths of both environments. Montilva et al., (2020) add that hybrid models rely on a variety of technological tools and services as instructional means, forming part of a broader learning ecosystem, defined as the interconnected community of learners and educators, resources, pedagogical principles, methods, systems, and management practices that support authentic and meaningful learning.

Carranza et al., (2021) and Ali et al. (2024) also notes that implementing a hybrid learning model implies a shift in the roles of both teachers and students, as well as new forms of interaction with content, resources, and digital tools. These changes impact the development of instructional strategies, assessment practices, and feedback mechanisms aimed at fostering relevant learning (El Messaoudi, 2024).

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Despite the flexibility of hybrid models, studies have shown that students often prefer face-to-face learning for its enhanced sense of engagement (Chen et al., 2022). Similarly, Osaili et al., (2023) found that students tend to learn more effectively on campus than in a hybrid environment. From the teachers' perspective, having students physically present on university campuses brings motivation, excitement, and "the adrenaline you need to give a good performance" (Raes et al., 2020, p. 154). Pavlidou et al., (2021) stress the importance for universities to adopt a pedagogical model that enhances the face-to-face experience with virtual learning strategies, integrating technology to create a flexible and engaging environment for students. Hybrid models also empower students to manage their time, learning spaces, develop digital skills, and assessment participation according to their individual needs (Barragán de Anda et al., 2021, Hu, 2024)

The growing prevalence of hybrid learning in higher education is due not only to its flexibility but also to its capacity to support personalized learning experiences that respond to students´ diverse needs and interests. The concept of learning experience, refers to the pedagogical strategies and practices employed by instructors to facilitate meaningful engagement with educational content. These involve diverse teaching methods designed to actively involve students and deliver curriculum in holistic and impactful manner (Bouilheres et al., 2020). The Understanding by Design (UbD framework supports the purposeful alignment of learning experiences with desired outcomes, promoting deeper engagement and more meaningful interactions.

However, there is limited research that examines how hybrid models are experienced by both students and teachers in Latin America higher education, particularly in disciplines such as Law, English Teaching, and Early Childhood Education.

The objective of this study is to explore the experiences of teachers and students during the implementation of a hybrid learning model, through qualitative inquiry using focus groups and interviews to identify key themes, perceptions, and challenges encountered in the process. By focusing on these specific academic disciplines in the Costa Rican context, the study offers empirically grounded insights into how hybrid education is practiced and perceived. These findings may inform institutional decisions related to instructional design, faculty development, and educational policy to enhance the effectiveness and equity of hybrid learning environments.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

a) How do students experience their learning in the hybrid model?

b) How do teachers experience their teaching in the hybrid model?

c) What are the pros and cons for students and teachers in the application of the hybrid model?

d) What didactic methods and strategies are suitable for use in a hybrid learning model?

e) What activities are suitable for using technology by students and teachers in the hybrid model?

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This article is organized into five sections: a review of relevant literature, the research methodology, presentation of findings, discussion of results, and conclusions with recommendations for future research.

Theoretical framework

Hybrid Learning Environment: Student Experience

Garba and Abdulhamid (2024) and Al-Enzi et al., (2024) reported that students find the hybrid learning environment (HLE) flexible, efficient, showing satisfaction, good performance, and overall efficacy. However, Osaili et al., (2023) indicated that some students experienced a lack of excitement and disliked attending on-campus classes due to mixed activities, particularly older married male students compared to younger students (sophomores). Li et al. (2021) noted that students in an HLE are less motivated and engaged, with lower levels of interaction in virtual settings compared to face-to-face classes.

Teacher Experiences in a Hybrid Learning Environment

The meaning of hybrid learning is continually evolving, influenced by new technologies, educational factors (Chavarria et al., 2024), and teaching approaches. Effectiveness can be compromised if the implementation does not consider the workload involved in preparing both face-to-face and virtual strategies, the use of tools, student participation, adaptability, and group management (Li et al., 2021; Carruana Martín et al., 2023). Al-Enzi et al., (2024) reported teachers' disapproval of the HLE due to a biased evaluation process aimed at minimizing cheating incidents, a lack of teacher-student interactions, and the lower performance of students attending virtual classes compared to on-campus learning activities. Alkaabi et al., (2023) demonstrated that "with enough guidance, training, and collaboration, teachers can reach a point of resilience and confidence. Trial and error may also serve as an impetus for improved teaching practices" (p. 20).

Outcomes of HLE Implementation

The implementation of a hybrid learning environment (HLE) requires instructional design and management of proposed learning strategies, access to resources and materials, and support for adapting to challenges and errors during application (Carruana et al., 2023, Melcher et al., 2025). Designing activities for hybrid learning involves both technical and instructional elements, but it demands greater preparation and intentionality to ensure meaningful and interactive learning experiences (Munday, 2022, Yaqin et al., 2025). For instance, a study by Mettis and Väljataga (2020) using Bloom´s revised taxonomy, found that teachers struggled to design coherent learning experiences targeting higher order thinking skills when integrating digital technologies within a hybrid learning model.

Compared to a traditional educational model, a hybrid model encourages collaboration, innovation, and commitment. Teachers can plan face-to-face strategies while students work and learn independently through online activities, promoting a balance between individual and social aspects. The institution provides instruction as well as emotional and physical support (Spadaro, 2023).

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The hybrid learning environment enhances students' appreciation, increases knowledge, strengthens capacities, and fosters safety and identity formation. It also creates a better connection between theory and practice (Kiviniemi, 2014; Lau et al., 2021; Millimouno et al., 2021; Morton et al., 2016). Goffard et al., (2019) found that learners need to adapt, organize, and modify their habits to meet the expectations of hybrid learning environments. Irani-Kermani et al., (2021) indicated that although HLE is a flexible model, it requires an efficient communication process to ensure students feel like active participants in the learning environment.

Hybrid learning models aim to help students develop the competencies and skills needed in various disciplines. This study addresses this gap by examining the experiences of students and teachers adopting the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework (Bowen, 2017), which emphasizes planning instruction by first identifying desired learning outcome, then determining acceptable evidence of learning, and finally designing instructional activities aligned to those goals. The results contribute to understanding how exposure to a progressively transformative teaching and learning model impacts education.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was applied to understand participants' experiences related to their learning process (Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2014). This method investigates social phenomena by examining data collected from focus groups and interviews (Creswell, 2007). The research was conducted with students and teachers from Universidad Latina, who were part of a pilot study of the hybrid model for Social Sciences. The unit of analysis were 107 students and 7 teachers, selected through a convenience sampling approach, where participants either enrolled voluntarily or were readily accessible. This method acknowledges potential bias and limits to generalizability (Emerson, 2021). Participants represented majors in Law, English Teaching, and Early Childhood Education.

To examine participants' experiences during the implementation period, qualitative data were collected through focus groups with students and individual interviews with teachers. The focus group sessions were conducted using a guide developed by Krueger (2002), which offer a structured approach to planning and moderating group discussions in qualitative research. Sessions took place during week 13 of the second quarter of 2023, during regular class hours. All focus groups were conducted via Microsoft Teams and were supported by volunteers who acted as facilitators and assisted students throughout the process. The session were recorded with participants 'consent for research purposes.

Teacher interviews were scheduled individually based on teacher´s availability and followed a semi-structured format based on the same Krueger (2002) framework. These interviews provided deeper insight into the implementation process from the instructional perspective.

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As part of the implementation, teachers were asked to engage in instructional design using a sequence developed based on the three stages of the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework: (1) identifying desired results, (2) determining acceptable evidence, and (3) planning learning experiences and instruction. To support this process, a template was provided to help structure the learning experiences and offer clearer guidance during the design phase.

For data analysis, mixed approach, both deductive and inductive was employed. Deductively, the analysis was guided by the predefined categories aligned with the focus group and interview protocols. Inductively, the researchers allowed for the emergence of new themes based on participants' responses. A coding framework was developed through iterative readings of the transcripts, resulting in a set of categories, subcategories, and codes that reflected both expected and emergent findings. This combination ensured a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives while maintaining alignment with the study´s research objectives.

Figure 1 outlines the methodological process applied in conducting focus groups, adapted from Krueger (2002). The scheme illustrates a structured, multi-step approach designed to facilitate the collection of rich, qualitative date through guided group discussion. It includes key steps such as:

1. Start question: the session begins with a simple, quick-response question that all participants can answer in approximately 10 seconds. This is intended to ease participants into the discussion and establish comfort within the group.

2. Introductory questions: These questions invite participants to recall relevant personal experiences related to the topic.

3. Key questions: These are the central questions of the session. Designed to provoke deep thinking and reflection.

4. Transition questions: At this step, the discussion is gently moved toward the main theme of the research and help participants shift focus from general impressions to more specific aspects of the topic.

5. Final questions: These wrap up the session by capturing participants' concluding thoughts and final positions on critical issues.

Table 1 presents the sequence and structure of questions used in the focus group discussions, organized into five key phases consistent with Krueger's (2002) framework.

1. Start: this opening question is designed to be quick and easy to answer, encouraging all participants to speak early in the session to build confidence.

2.Introduction: these questions aim to elicit participants' initial perceptions and personal connections to the hybrid learning model. They encourage reflection on past experiences and help establish the relevance of the topic to each participant.

3. Transition: these questions serve as a bridge between general impressions and more focused

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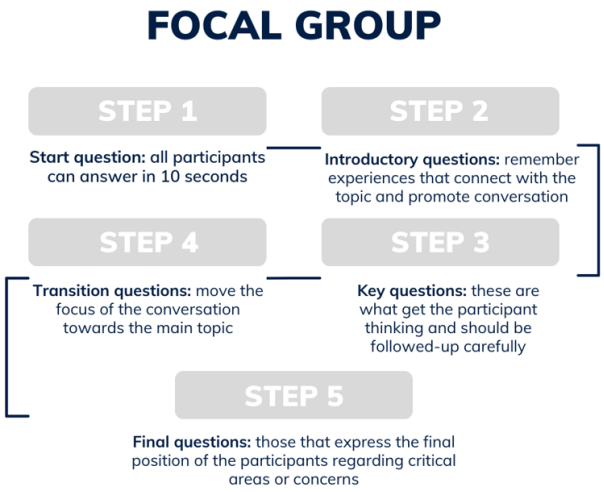
exploration. They guide participants to consider specific aspects of the learning process and begin analyzing the instructional design and outcomes.

4. Key: these are the central questions of the session. They target the core objectives of the research by prompting critical reflection on skill development and the perceived impact of the hybrid model on learning processes and outcomes.

5. Final: These concluding questions invite participants to synthesize their thoughts and offer constructive feedback. They help identify areas for improvement and ensure the participants' final perspectives are captures, especially regarding changes needed to enhance the hybrid model.

Figure 1.

Methodology for focus groups



Source: Scheme prepared for the research based on Krueger (2002).

Table 1.

Questions for Focal Groups

Phase	Question
Start	What do you like the most about the hybrid model?
Introduction	What do you think about the model?
	What does it mean for you? How was your experience during last quarter?
Transition	Did you notice different learning activities?
	How can you describe them? How was the class? Did you get what you expected in terms of learning?
Key	What new skill did you get as a student in this learning environment that you did not have before? Was the learning acquired differently with this model?
Final	Is there anything from the model that should be different?
	Are there any improvements for the proposed model?

Source: Own elaboration.

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The Figure 2 presents the structured protocol used for conducting semi-structures interviews, designed to gather in-depth perspectives from participants regarding their experiences with they hybrid pedagogical model. The interview process is organized into five steps that ensure a local and coherent flow, allowing consistency and flexibility in data collection.

1. Welcome message: the interviewer begins by thanking the participant and acknowledging their willingness to contribute and create a comfortable environment.

2. Conversation begins: an open-ended question invites participants to share their general impressions and initial reflections. It encourages spontaneous responses that establish context for the rest of the interview.

3. Agreement: these questions aim to identify perceived outcomes and gather feedback. Participants are encouraged to provide on observable achievements and to offer constructive suggestions for improving the model.

4. Strategies: this phase delves deeper into the practical aspects of implementing the hybrid approach, particularly regarding planning, execution and perceived effectiveness.

5. Farewell: the interview concludes with a closing questions that give participants the opportunity to express any final thoughts.

Figure 2.

Process followed for interviews

Source: Scheme prepared for the research based on Krueger (2002).

Regarding Table 2, it outlines the semi-structured interview dynamic designed to explore participants' experiences with the hybrid model.

1. Welcome message: this step helps build rapport and sets a respectful, open tone for the discussion.

2. Conversation begins: these open-ended questions initiate the dialogue by inviting participants to reflect broadly on their experiences. It allows the interviewer to gather initial impressions and emotional responses to the hybrid learning model.

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3. Agreement: these questions aim to assess outcomes and perceptions of success related to student learning. They also open space for constructive feedback, enabling participants to contribute ideas for improving the hybrid approach.

4. Strategies: this step seeks to understand the design and implementation aspects of the model. Participants analyze specific teaching strategies and provide balanced views on strengths and weaknesses encountered during the process.

5. Farewell: the interviewer concluded with a polite closing that offers participants a final opportunity to share any additional insights or reflections that were not covered before.

Table 2.

Questions for Interviews

Phase	Question
Welcome	What are we discussing in the implementation of the hybrid model?
Conversation begins	How has been the experience with the pedagogical model?
	What is your opinion of the proposed implementation?
	Is there anything from the model that should be different?
	Are there any improvements for the proposed model?
Strategies	Were you able to complete the course planning templates?
	What was the experience of carrying out the instructional design of the course?
	What methodological activities adjusted well to the hybrid model?
	What was the role of the students in this model? What are the pros and cons of the model?
Agreement	What is the achievement of students in this hybrid model?
	What aspects were modified in pedagogical mediation and the teacher-student relationship?
	If you had the opportunity to do it all over again, what would you change? Do you have any suggestions for improvements?
Farewell	Thank you for your participation

Source: Own elaboration.

To ensure traceability and transparency of the analysis, all transcripts were coded using a systematic coding framework in a qualitative data analysis. Each theme and subcategory was directly linked to supporting quotation from the participants 'narratives. Representative quotes were selected to illustrate key finding to support auditability and provide a clear chain of evidence from data to interpretation.

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RESULTS

Focus Groups

The authors analyzed the qualitative data and identified categories and subcategories based on participants' responses. Regarding their opinions on the hybrid model, students found it offered flexibility to attend both face-to-face and virtual classes during the academic period, resulting in savings on transportation and food expenses. They noted several advantages of the model, including better interaction with peers and professors, and increased accessibility to education since they could attend some courses from convenient locations, primarily their homes. Some examples include: "This hybrid option seems like a very good idea to me, because there are times when the courses and the content in a lesson can be very theoretical, so it is very useful when it's virtual and we can understand perfectly with the help of the teacher." (Participant 15, July 7, 2023). Another student stated, "Well, the pros are the ease of being at home or some being at the university because they have another class, but the majority of us are at home with our families, without spending money on travel and food." (Participant 2, July 4, 2023).

However, there were also disadvantages, such as limited learning compared to full face-to-face classes, long virtual lectures, low student commitment to attending on-campus learning, and conflicts with courses scheduled on the same day. For example, one student remarked, "Learning has been limited; it's just connecting to get instructions and then leaving; it's only to give us tasks." (Participant 45, July 4, 2023).

Students were asked about their experience with the new learning model. They responded with dissatisfaction due to a lack of organization with schedules and the fact that professors were not teaching within university campuses for virtual classes. Despite this, they appreciated recorded lessons, innovation, and the interactive strategies developed by teachers in both face-to-face and virtual classes. Learners reported that learning experiences were well planned and implemented, taking into account learning styles They described the activities as engaging, grounded in real world cases and designed to encourage active participation. However, there was a high academic workload, and students often performed presentations, affecting time management and resulting in a lack of feedback. For instance, one student noted, "It is important that the classes or the model they want to incorporate be 100% in the classroom, because in our case, we could join the teacher in the 3 pm class and then in the normal 6 pm class." (Participant 33, July 6, 2023).

Students also mentioned that the hybrid model allowed them to develop new abilities such as expression of ideas, effective participation, collaboration, organization, patience, perseverance, and respect to understand the class dynamic. They also mentioned the ability to follow the agreed schedule and apply theory in case analyses simulating real practices. However, they pointed out that some tea-

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chers did not fully dedicate themselves to comply with the plan for face-to-face and virtual sessions, resulting in learning that was no different from the traditional model. One student shared, "Learning was different because we worked in groups with other students we did not know or were not used to working with, so there was a lot of practice in patience and mutual support; it was very nice to be able to socialize with classmates." (Participant 43, July 6, 2023).

Students suggested modifications and improvements to the hybrid model, such as better scheduling and planning, realistic objectives for asynchronous activities, and the importance of providing feedback. They recommended maintaining strategies that increase social interaction among students and teachers, allowing more time for online tasks, and letting students decide whether to attend virtually or physically based on their needs. For example, one student said, "I think the order of the schedule should be met." Another commented, "It is important to have realistic objectives when doing asynchronous work, time-wise, and not give us work that cannot be done in the specified time, such as reading half a book in one class and doing a summary in the same class." (Participant 10, July 4, 2023).

Interviews

Teachers were asked to share their thoughts and experiences on implementing the hybrid model. Some described it as a win-win scenario, offering flexibility and promoting student retention. However, it required significant adaptation, as most were accustomed to traditional face-to-face teaching methods. One teacher shared, "I initially taught in a traditional manner, then we started with flipped classroom approach. Students would study beforehand, present in class, and we would hold discussions after their presentations." Another added, "In the end, we succeeded by blending virtual work with in-person classes, workshops and talks with experts. The students were very appreciative." (Participant 2, July 11, 2023).

When engaging in instructional design and planning, some teachers expressed confusion and reported time constrains when completing the UbD templates. They acknowledged that instructional design is a complex skill that requires ongoing practice and cannot be mastered in a single period. Nonetheless, they recognize that the process promoted greater clarity in defining learning experiences and enabled a more coherent integration of technology to support both conceptual understanding and learner autonomy. Over time, with continued effort, the approach became more manageable. One teacher shared, "At first, it was a bit overwhelming, but gradually, it became easier." Another added, "The templates were challenging, and I am still working on details, but once you get the hang of it, it becomes routine." (Participant 6, July 12, 2023). These findings suggest that the use of UbD framework contributed to improve instructional coherence, particularly in aligning objectives, assessments, and technology use to foster deeper learning.

Methodological strategies also had to be adapted to suit both face-to-face and virtual sessions. Active learning approaches, such as project-based learning and flipped classroom, were fundamental

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to keep lessons engaging and prevent monotony. Teachers used multiple communication channels to ensure students knew whether a session was face-to-face or virtual, as students often requested reminders. One teacher explained, “Before every class, I informed them whether it would be virtual or face-to-face – it´s part of the job”. Another noted, “Students engaged in research, presented their ideas, and the sessions were very dynamic.” (Participant 4, July 10, 2023).

Teachers also discussed the pros and cons of the hybrid model. One major challenge was students’ reluctance to turn on their cameras, which negatively impacted their concentration and participation. Some teachers felt the system wasn´t yet ready for students to take full responsibility for their education, and that many educators remain resistant to change. However, the hybrid model allowed for greater student collaboration, inclusivity -particularly for students with disabilities- and a more active learning experience. Teachers mentioned stronger connection with students, helping them develop competencies that are difficult to foster in a purely virtual environment. As one teacher noted, “I asked a student a question, but he didn´t respond because he wasn´t paying attention. After calling him multiple times, he finally apologized. This kind of thing would not happen in a face-to-face class where there are fewer distractions.” (Participant 1, July 10, 2023).

Teachers highlighted several student achievements through the hybrid model, such as a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts, improved peer interaction, teamwork, confidence, and satisfaction during activities. Adjustments need to be made throughout the course to optimize learning, such as reducing the number of virtual sessions, decreasing evaluation items, and improving communication through feedback and reminders. Active methodologies helped students recognize that learning comes from various sources, including expert talks, field trips, case studies, and hands-on activities. One teacher commented, “In face-to-face classes, I could provide immediate feedback, but for virtual sessions, I relied on emails and WhatsApp to offer reminders and answer questions.” (Participant 6, July 13, 2023). Another teacher shared, “The bond with students changed because of the dynamic and active learning activities. This fosters a strong socio-emotional relationship, which helps students connect with the material. For students to enjoy a course, they have to connect with the teacher. If that bond is missing, an emotional barrier can hinder their learning.” (Participant 8, July 11, 2023).

Teachers were asked to provide suggestions if they were to apply the model again. They emphasized the need for more fieldwork experiences, the importance of designing learning strategies for both face-to-face or virtual sessions, and a careful balance of workloads to prevent burnout. Some teachers emphasized the value of moving around the classroom to observe how students are learning, engaging with them directly, and providing immediate feedback. One teacher shared, “I like to walk around, interact with students, and stay after class to answer any question they may have.” (Participant 5, July 19, 2023). Another said, “I´d like to reevaluate the course structure and approach it differently, now that I have a better understanding of the hybrid model” (Participant 7, July 20, 2023).

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DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the perspectives and experiences of students and teachers regarding the hybrid learning model implemented in Social Sciences. In response to the first research question, students expressed overall satisfaction with the model, highlighting its flexibility in allowing them to attend classes either in person or virtually. These findings align with Garba and Abdulhamid (2024), who concluded that student favor hybrid learning for its balance between flexibility and personal interaction. In contrasts with previous research that found differences in level of satisfaction between on-campus and hybrid environments (Osaili et al., 2023). Students highlighted the benefits of recorded lessons, which supported their learning throughout the academic period, and the use of innovative and interactive strategies that promoted engagement and expanded access to higher education. However, students also reported dissatisfaction with the academic calendar, noting that courses were scheduled without consideration for whether they were face-to-face or virtual. Additionally, they felt that learning in virtual sessions was limited due to long lectures, high workload, and insufficient feedback.

The second research question focused on teacher's experience with the hybrid model. Teachers acknowledged the model´s flexibility, suggesting it might contribute to improve student retention rates. However, they emphasized the challenges of transitioning from traditional teaching methods to more dynamic and active learning approaches. A common concern was that students appeared disengaged during virtual classes, often failing to participate in discussions or turn on their cameras, leaving teachers uncertain about their level of engagement. This observation aligns with findings from Li et al., (2021). Teachers also noted that would take time for them to adapt to hybrid format and fully embrace the positive changes it offers (Alkaabi et al., 2023).

The application of UbD supported intentional instructional planning and enhanced the alignment between objectives, learning experiences, and assessments. This alignment was particularly beneficial in the hybrid learning context, where maintaining coherence across modalities is often challenging.

Regarding the third question, both students and teachers recognized the skills developed by learners through the hybrid model, including verbal communication, collaboration, teamwork, confidence, thematic knowledge, patience, perseverance, respect for others, social interaction, and motivation (Raes et al., 2020). Participants appreciated the modifications made in learning strategies, which were developed to meet diverse needs and learning styles. As Lira López & Uribe López (2022) highlighted, the application of active methodologies is essential for maintaining student interest.

The fourth research question asked for strategies to improve the hybrid learning model. Suggestions included better planning of academic calendars to avoid scheduling conflicts, allocating time for asynchronous activities (Barragán de Anda et al., 2021), incorporating more hands-on experiences related to fieldwork, and maximizing face-to-face class time for interaction and support to help students

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achieve learning objectives (Chavarría et al., 2024). Providing timely and constructive feedback was also emphasized as a key area for improvement (Carranza et al., 2021).

Lastly, in response to the final research question about activities that integrate technology into the hybrid model, both students and teachers referred to the use of virtual rooms for group work, simulations for case analysis, recorded lessons for content review, and flipped learning to enhance discussions. Other tools, such as video interaction and apps, were also mentioned as effective for promoting engagement with learning topics and peer collaboration. In contrast El Messaoudi (2024) suggests that hybrid learning can be effectively implemented across educational settings to enhance digital literacy with limited resources.

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides valuable insights into the perspective and experiences of students and teachers regarding the implementation of a hybrid learning model in Social Sciences, highlighting both its potential benefits and its challenges. The flexibility of the hybrid approach emerged as a key strength, enabling students to attend classes either in person or virtually while benefiting form recorded lessons and innovative, interactive strategies that supported engagement and skill development. These finding reinforce the model´s capacity to expand access to higher education and foster essential competencies.

However, significant challenges were identified, including poor course scheduling of courses, high workloads, insufficient feedback, and limited student engagement in virtual settings. Teachers also reported difficulties in transitioning from traditional methodologies to more dynamic and interactive approaches. This highlights the need for additional time, training, and resources to effectively implement instructional design using the UbD framework, which is well suited for hybrid learning environments. Moreover, student disengagement during virtual classes, particularly through non-participation and the lack of camera use, further underscores the importance of developing strategies that promote interaction and active learning.

To address these challenges, participants proposed a range of improvements, including more effective academic planning to reduce scheduling conflicts, integrating hand-on and active learning methodologies, maximizing interaction during face-to-face sessions, and providing timely and constructive feedback. Additionally, leveraging technology through virtual rooms, simulations, flipped learning, and interactive applications was recognized as a means to enrich the hybrid model and promote collaboration and engagement among learners.

In conclusion, while the hybrid learning model demonstrates considerable potential to enhance accessibility, engagement, and skill development in higher education, its effectiveness depends on addressing its limitations through strategic adjustments and continuous refinement. Aligning the model with the need and expectations of both students and educators will be critical for establishing it as a sustainable and impactful approach in higher education.

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Based on the findings of this study, future research could explore the long-term effects of hybrid learning models on student performance, retention, and the development of discipline-specific competencies. Comparative studies between hybrid and face-to-face modalities across different academic disciplines and institutions may provide broader generalizability and offer insights into best practices. Furthermore, incorporating the perspectives of a more diverse student population, including participants from rural or vulnerable communities, could help refine hybrid learning models to ensure greater inclusivity, accessibility and equity in higher education.

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