

Comparative Study of Students' Peer Support within Open Groups on Social Network Sites Among Education, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship Students at Quezon City University

Niña C. Apusaga¹, Randel D. Estacio^{2*}, Erlee Angel S. Reyes³

¹Industrial Engineering Department, College of Engineering, Quezon City University

²Early Childhood Education Department, College of Education, Quezon City University

³Entrepreneurship Department, College of Business, Quezon City University

*Corresponding author

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ABSTRACT

This study explores peer support dynamics within open groups on social network sites among students from different disciplines—education, engineering, and entrepreneurship—at Quezon City University during the 2023-2024 academic year. Using a mixed methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and content analysis, the research investigates the extent, nature, and effectiveness of peer support in these online communities. Findings reveal that all disciplines experience high levels of effective information sharing and community building, though entrepreneurship students exhibit distinct patterns. Common challenges like information overload and moderation issues are identified, suggesting the need for tailored interventions. Despite some disciplinary differences, the overall perception of benefits and challenges is consistent. The study highlights the importance of discipline-specific peer support strategies, recommending active engagement, addressing challenges, and leveraging perceived benefits to strengthen peer support systems and enhance collaborative learning across academic fields.

Keywords: Peer Support, Social Network Sites, Open Groups, Online Communities, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp provide open groups where users can participate in discussions, share information, and connect with like-minded individuals [1], [2]. These communities foster learning, knowledge-sharing, and networking, which help participants exchange experiences and connect with potential mentors [3]. Open groups also serve as spaces for seeking advice, sharing information, and building skills like communication and presentation [4]. Studies highlight benefits such as collaborative learning, networking, and exposure to diverse perspectives [5], [6]. However, factors like group dynamics, interaction quality, and facilitator guidance impact the effectiveness of these groups [7].

Peer support within open groups plays a crucial role in fostering collaboration, problem-solving, and motivation [8], [9]. It enhances learning by offering timely assistance, diverse perspectives, and encouragement. The sense of belonging and shared learning journey reduces isolation and motivates active participation. Recognizing the importance of peer support, the current study investigates its dynamics in open groups at Quezon City University across disciplines like education, engineering, and entrepreneurship.

This study examines the types of support offered, engagement frequency, and perceived benefits in peer support within online communities. By analyzing the experiences of students in different academic programs, the research identifies factors influencing peer interactions and explores potential disciplinary differences. The findings aim to shed light on how social networking sites facilitate peer support and collaborative learning

across academic disciplines.

METHODS

Study Design

To address the research objectives presented in this study, the sequential explanatory mixed method research approach was employed. Sequential explanatory mixed methods research is a research approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods in a sequential manner to gain a comprehensive understanding of a research problem. In this approach, the researcher typically starts with one method (either qualitative or quantitative) and then follows up with the other method to provide a more in-depth explanation or validation of the initial findings [10]. The research employed a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach to investigate peer support dynamics within the context of three different programs at Quezon City University. Quantitative data were initially collected through structured surveys to provide a broad understanding of peer support dynamics, followed by statistical analysis to discern patterns and trends. Subsequently, qualitative insights were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 12 randomly selected participants from the survey sample, allowing for a deeper exploration of individual experiences and challenges related to peer support within open groups on social network sites. Content analysis of online interactions within open groups further enriched the contextual understanding of peer support dynamics. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis techniques facilitated a comprehensive understanding of peer support dynamics across education, engineering, and entrepreneurship disciplines. Comparative analysis techniques were utilized to identify distinctive patterns, differences, and commonalities in peer support dynamics. This methodological approach was deemed appropriate as it enabled the researchers to address the complexity of the research problem from multiple perspectives, enrich the contextual understanding of peer support dynamics, validate and explain quantitative findings through qualitative insights, and provide a holistic analysis of peer support dynamics across different disciplines.

Participants

The participants of this study are the selected students from the College of Education, College of Business Administration and Accountancy, and College of Engineering in Quezon City University. Students from the College of Computer Studies were not included in the study to shed light on the role of social networking sites in facilitating peer support among students other than those who are enrolled in computer related courses.

The general population of this study refers to all students in Quezon City University who are officially enrolled in the programs Bachelor in Early Childhood Education (BECED), Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship (BSEnt), and Bachelor of Science in Electronics and Communication Engineering (BSECE) during the Academic Year 2023 – 2024. The total population consists of two hundred sixteen (216) BECED students (4.62% of the total population), one thousand six hundred sixty-five (1665) BSIE students (29.44% of the total population), and three thousand seven hundred twenty-nine (3,729) BSEnt students (65.94% of the total population), with a total of five thousand six hundred fifty-five (5,655).

To get the sample size, the researchers used the Raosoft sample size calculator, this software is design to calculate or generate the sample size of a research or survey. With the 5% margin of error, 95% of confidence level, 5,655 population size, and 50% of response distribution, the computed sample size is three hundred sixty (360) respondents.

To ensure comprehensive representation, a stratified sampling method was applied, accounting for proportional inclusion from each program. The sample respondents consist of seventeen (17) BECED students, one hundred six (106) BSIE students, and two hundred thirty-seven (237) BSEnt students, for a total of three hundred sixty (360) respondents.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using survey and a semi-structured interview questionnaire. Quantitative data were

acquired through structured surveys, offering a quantitative lens on peer support dynamics, while qualitative insights were gathered through semi-structured interviews, enabling a deeper exploration of individual experiences.

The survey questionnaire was a researcher-made survey questionnaire, and the contents were based on the existing relevant literature and studies relevant to the role of social networking sites in facilitating peer support among students from diverse academic backgrounds.

To determine the instrument's validity, three experts from the field of education were asked to validate the form and content of the survey questionnaire. Their feedback and recommendations were reflected in the final form of the instrument. In addition, to test the instrument's reliability, the researchers asked fifteen QCU students who are not part of this study to answer the questionnaire. The calculated Cronbach alpha is 0.83 which is considered as 'Acceptable'.

For data collection, an online survey through Google Forms was conducted to ensure a more accessible and efficient means of gathering information. Following the completion of the survey, the researchers tallied and summarized the collected data. For focused group discussion, the researchers organized an online Google Meeting to 12 participants (four participants from each program) who randomly selected from the total sample respondents. The discussion lasted for an hour.

The researchers employed descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, to interpret collected data. In addition, the researcher also utilized the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for inferential statistics. For qualitative data, responses and insights of the respondents were presented, discussed, and analyzed thematically.

Ethical Considerations

An informed consent form was given to the respondent prior to the conduct of the survey and the researchers also considered the preferred time and availability of the respondents in the conduct of the FGD.

RESULTS

Types and Nature of Peer Support

The comparative study aimed to explore the dynamics of students' peer support within open groups on social network sites across three different programs at Quezon City University: Education (BECed), Engineering (BSIE), and Entrepreneurship (BSEnt). Table 1 presents the mean scores for various types of peer support received by students in these groups, with a focus on five key aspects.

Table I Types of Peer Support That Can Get from The Open Groups on Social Network Sites

	Types of Peer Support	Program									Over-all Mean	V.I
		BECed			BSIE			BSEnt				
		X	SD	V.I	X	SD	V.I	X	SD	V.I		
1.	The group effectively shares valuable information and resources.	3.76	1.15	A	3.52	1.11	A	3.37	1.08	N	3.55	A
2.	The group fosters a sense of community and celebrates achievements.	3.65	1.11	A	3.43	1.04	A	3.44	1.11	A	3.51	A
3.	Members share valuable experiences and lessons learned.	3.71	1.31	A	3.62	1.08	A	3.49	1.14	A	3.61	A
4.	Members encourage and motivate each other to pursue their goals.	3.41	1.12	A	3.51	1.20	A	3.39	1.09	N	3.44	A
5.	Members collaborate on skill-building activities and offer guidance.	4.00	1.12	A	3.51	1.11	A	3.43	1.16	A	3.65	A
Over-all Mean		3.71	1.15	A	3.52	1.11	A	3.42	1.11	A	3.55	A

The study examined peer support dynamics within social network groups among students from three academic disciplines: BECEd, BSIE, and BSEnt. The results revealed high levels of agreement across all groups on various aspects of peer support. BECEd students reported the highest mean scores, particularly in areas like sharing valuable information and experiences, fostering a sense of community, and collaborating on skill-building activities. This indicates that these students find the peer networks within their groups highly supportive for both academic and personal growth. Collaboration and guidance in skill-building activities were especially valued, with mean scores ranging from 3.65 to 4.00 across the groups.

The findings suggest that open social network groups effectively promote positive peer interactions and contribute to a sense of community, with students from all disciplines benefiting from these platforms. The study highlights the significance of these virtual communities in enhancing the overall student experience, supporting the idea that peer networks can facilitate knowledge exchange, motivation, and skill development. BECEd students reported stronger connections within their peer groups, likely due to shared educational backgrounds. These insights emphasize the value of peer support in academic settings and suggest that such networks play a crucial role in fostering a collaborative and supportive learning environment.

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted to examine the variation between the groups.

Table Ii Difference Between The Responses Of The Three Groups Towards The Types Of Peer Support That They Get from The Open Groups On Social Network Sites

Sources	SS	df	MS	F	P value	F crit	Interpretation
Between Groups	0.206173	2	0.103087				
Within Groups	0.20712	12	0.01726	5.973	0.016	3.885	Statistically Significant
Total	0.413293	14	0.029521				

The F-statistic for between-groups differences is 5.973 with a significance level of 0.016, which is lower than the critical F value of 3.885. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the responses of the three groups towards the types of peer support they receive from the open groups on social network sites. Therefore, the null hypothesis, suggesting no significant difference between the groups, is rejected.

The variability within groups, as indicated by the within-groups mean square (MS) and the F-ratio, is 0.20712 and 0.01726, respectively. The total variance (0.413293) is the sum of the between-groups and within-groups variances. The obtained F-statistic demonstrates that the variance between groups is more substantial than what would be expected by random chance alone.

The results of the ANOVA suggest that there are significant differences in how students from Education, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship perceive and experience peer support within open groups on social network sites. This finding underscores the importance of considering disciplinary variations when designing and implementing strategies to enhance peer support systems on these platforms, contributing valuable insights to

the overarching goal of the research. Further post-hoc analyses may be conducted to identify specific pairwise differences between the groups, shedding more light on the nature of these distinctions in peer support experiences across academic disciplines at Quezon City University.

The findings from the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) provide insights into the various forms of peer support within open groups on social network sites, highlighting their significant impact on students' well-being and sense of community at Quezon City University. The key types of peer support identified by the respondents include Informational Support, Social Support, Experiential Support, Motivational Support, and Skill Development Support. These forms of support collectively contribute to enhancing students' academic experiences and personal growth, fostering a strong sense of belonging and community among participants.

Informational support emerged as a crucial aspect of the peer support network, with participants appreciating the wealth of resources, research findings, and practical tips shared within these groups. This exchange of information not only empowers students by enhancing their problem-solving abilities but also helps them navigate challenges more effectively. Social support, on the other hand, played a key role in creating a sense of community. Participants highlighted the comfort of connecting with like-minded individuals who understood their struggles, which led to the formation of a virtual support system where members celebrate each other's successes and offer comfort during tough times.

Experiential support was also identified as an important dimension, with students leveraging shared personal stories to gain insights and guidance for their own journeys. This exchange of experiences created a mutually beneficial cycle, where individuals both learned from others and contributed their own knowledge to support peers. Motivational support emerged as a powerful element, with participants expressing gratitude for the encouragement and positive affirmations they received from fellow group members. These motivational messages helped boost their resilience, especially during challenging times, reinforcing the role of peer support in maintaining a positive mindset.

Skill development support was highlighted as another tangible benefit of participating in these open groups. Students reported gaining valuable skills, including stress management and practical techniques for daily challenges, which directly contributed to their personal growth and well-being. The advice and guidance shared within the groups allowed participants to incorporate new skills into their routines, improving their ability to manage stress and navigate various aspects of life. This form of support was seen as instrumental in enhancing overall well-being and personal development.

The study underscores the importance of these different forms of peer support, which work together to create a supportive and enriching environment for students. The positive impacts of informational, social, experiential, motivational, and skill development support highlight the significance of open social networks in fostering a collaborative and empowering academic community. These platforms not only help students address immediate academic and personal challenges but also contribute to their long-term growth and resilience.

The comparative study reveals that peer support within open groups on social network sites is multifaceted and plays a crucial role in fostering a strong sense of community and well-being among students at Quezon City University. The diverse forms of support identified in the study collectively contribute to enhancing students' academic success, personal growth, and overall quality of life, demonstrating the value of these virtual communities in supporting students across various academic disciplines.

Table 3 presents the mean scores for various aspects of peer support within these open groups.

The findings reveal that the overall mean scores for peer support within open groups at Quezon City University range from 3.24 to 3.49, with BSEnt scoring the highest. While the responses indicate a neutral perception of active experience sharing, there is room for improvement in this area. On the other hand, the groups showed strong responsiveness to inquiries, with mean scores ranging from 3.53 to 3.69, signaling that members promptly respond to each other's needs. Collaborative problem-solving also garnered positive feedback, suggesting that students from different disciplines are actively working together to address challenges. However, group interactions involving encouragement and motivation showed neutral scores, indicating that

while there is moderate support, further improvements could enhance the group's overall encouragement dynamics. Lastly, the sharing of helpful resources received strong agreement, highlighting the positive impact of resource exchange on collaborative learning.

TABLE III NATURE OF PEER SUPPORT THAT CAN GET FROM THE OPEN GROUPS ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

Nature of Peer Support		Program									Over-all Mean	V.I
		BECed			BSIE			BSEnt				
		X	SD	V.I	X	SD	V.I	X	SD	V.I		
1.	Group members actively share their experiences related to the group's focus.	3.24	0.90	N	3.37	1.14	N	3.49	1.14	A	3.37	N
2.	Members in the group respond promptly to inquiries and requests for support.	3.63	1.00	A	3.69	1.15	A	3.53	1.13	A	3.62	A
3.	Members collaboratively work together to solve problems or challenges.	3.18	1.13	N	3.51	1.15	A	3.48	1.11	A	3.39	N
4.	Group interactions include words of encouragement and motivation.	3.24	1.20	N	3.39	1.12	N	3.38	1.09	N	3.34	N
5.	Peers regularly share helpful resources such as articles, guides, or tools.	3.12	0.86	N	3.63	1.14	A	3.59	1.17	A	3.45	A
Over-all Mean		3.28	1.02	N	3.52	1.14	A	3.49	1.13	A	3.43	A

The study underscores the strengths and areas for growth within the peer support systems in these open groups. The high responsiveness and active collaboration among students reflect the effectiveness of these platforms in providing timely support and fostering teamwork. However, the neutral ratings for experience sharing and motivational interactions point to areas where the support environment could be enhanced. This aligns with existing literature on the importance of emotional and motivational support in maintaining positive peer learning environments. Additionally, the strong sharing of resources suggests that these platforms are valuable for educational enrichment and skill development. Overall, these findings offer valuable insights into the current dynamics of peer support, highlighting areas for improvement and potential strategies to optimize the peer support systems at Quezon City University.

Table 4 presents the mean scores for five different aspects of peer support across the three academic disciplines: Education (BECed), Engineering (BSIE), and Entrepreneurship (BSEnt).

TABLE IV DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF THE THREE GROUPS TOWARDS THE NATURE OF PEER SUPPORT THAT CAN GET FROM THE OPEN GROUPS ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

Sources	SS	df	MS	F	P value	F crit	Interpretation
Between Groups	0.168693	2	0.084347	3.813	0.052	3.885	Statistically Significant
Within Groups	0.26548	12	0.022123				
Total	0.434173	14	0.031012				

The findings reveal significant differences in the nature of peer support across academic disciplines at Quezon City University. Entrepreneurship students (BSEnt) reported the highest engagement in sharing experiences, with a mean score of 3.49, while Education students (BECed) scored the lowest at 3.24, suggesting less active experience sharing. However, students across all disciplines showed strong responsiveness to inquiries, with mean scores ranging from 3.53 to 3.69. Collaborative problem-solving was generally well-received, with BSEnt again leading at 3.48, while BECed students had a slightly lower score of 3.18. Group interactions with words of encouragement and motivation received neutral scores, and the sharing of helpful resources was positively rated, with mean scores between 3.45 and 3.63 across all groups.

Statistical analysis, specifically the ANOVA results, indicated a moderate but statistically significant difference in the peer support experiences across the three academic groups, with an F-statistic of 3.813 and a significance level of 0.052, which is close to the critical value. This suggests that while there are differences in how peer support is experienced across disciplines, the findings are not entirely conclusive, and the null hypothesis remains plausible. These insights highlight the need for tailored peer support strategies that consider the distinct needs of students in Education, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship, enhancing the effectiveness of peer networks within open groups on social network sites.

The nature of peer support within open groups on social network sites among students at Quezon City University is shaped by several key features. One prominent theme is experience sharing, where members openly discuss their triumphs and challenges, creating a collective journey of shared wisdom. This deep personal exchange fosters a sense of solidarity, as individuals from diverse backgrounds contribute their stories, forming a supportive network that transcends geographical boundaries. This type of peer support in online groups stands out for its capacity to connect individuals with similar experiences, creating a richer, more empathetic environment compared to traditional face-to-face interactions.

Another notable feature is the immediacy of responsive interactions. Students emphasized the advantage of real-time support within open groups, where questions or concerns receive almost instantaneous responses, creating a 24/7 support system. This rapid feedback contrasts with the slower pace of face-to-face interactions and highlights the unique advantage of online platforms in offering continuous, timely support. The quick exchange of insights, empathy, and practical advice provides students with a constant network of assistance during moments of uncertainty, enhancing their sense of security and well-being.

Collaborative problem-solving was also identified as a defining aspect of peer support in open groups.

Participants emphasized the collective effort involved in addressing challenges, with the group pooling diverse perspectives to develop solutions. Unlike traditional face-to-face interactions, where individual insights may dominate, online groups tap into the collective intelligence of the community. This approach fosters innovation and collaboration, providing students with a broader range of ideas and practical advice, which can contribute to effective problem-solving and a sense of mutual support.

Encouragement and motivation were recognized as key elements that create an uplifting atmosphere within open groups. Students likened the experience to having a virtual cheering squad that offers consistent support during both achievements and setbacks. The positive and encouraging environment fosters resilience and emotional well-being, contributing to a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding. This supportive dynamic within online peer support groups contrasts with the varying levels of encouragement students may experience in traditional face-to-face interactions, offering a more continuous and inclusive source of motivation.

Resource-sharing emerged as another critical feature of peer support in online groups. Participants described these groups as hubs for valuable resources, ranging from articles and videos to practical tips and tools. This aspect of online peer support extends beyond emotional support, providing students with tangible assistance in navigating various challenges. The active sharing of resources highlights the practical value of online peer support platforms, where members contribute knowledge that goes beyond personal experiences, offering concrete solutions and strategies that can be applied in real-life situations.

Overall, the findings from the Focus Group Discussions suggest that the peer support within open groups on social network sites is rich, diverse, and uniquely tailored to the needs of students in different academic disciplines. The combination of experience sharing, responsive interactions, collaborative problem-solving, encouragement, motivation, and resource-sharing makes online peer support a valuable complement to traditional face-to-face interactions and other online support platforms. These distinctive characteristics of online peer support underscore its potential to enhance students' academic and emotional well-being, offering a supportive environment that adapts to the dynamic needs of individuals in various fields of study.

Frequency of Engagement and Perceived Benefits

Table 5 illustrates the mean scores for five different aspects of engagement across the academic disciplines of Education (BECed), Engineering (BSIE), and Entrepreneurship (BSEnt).

TABLE V FREQUENCY OF ENGAGEMENT OF THE RESPONDENTS IN AN OPEN GROUP ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

Frequency of Engagement		Program									Over-all Mean	V.I
		BECed			BSIE			BSEnt				
		X	SD	V.I	X	SD	V.I	X	SD	V.I		
1.	I actively participate in discussions and activities within the group.	3.76	0.83	OF	4.07	0.84	OF	3.97	0.79	OF	3.93	OF
2.	I regularly contribute by posting content, such as comments, questions, or updates.	4.29	0.77	OF	4.00	0.80	OF	4.07	0.84	OF	4.12	OF
3.	I engage with content shared by other group members, such as liking, commenting, or sharing.	4.06	0.75	OF	4.05	0.82	OF	4.04	0.81	OF	4.05	OF
4.	I regularly check the group for updates and new content.	3.94	0.90	OF	4.05	0.80	OF	4.05	0.84	OF	4.01	OF
5.	My engagement level in the group remains consistent over time.	3.88	0.86	OF	4.03	0.87	OF	3.99	0.81	OF	3.97	OF
Over-all Mean		3.99	0.82	OF	4.04	0.82	OF	4.02	0.82	OF	4.02	OF

The findings reveal high levels of engagement within open groups on social network sites among students at Quezon City University, with students from different disciplines displaying varying degrees of involvement. Engineering students (BSIE) showed the highest participation in group discussions and activities, followed by Entrepreneurship students (BSEnt) and Education students (BECed). In contrast, Education students scored the highest in terms of regularly contributing content, demonstrating a strong level of engagement in generating discussion topics and updates. Across all disciplines, students consistently interacted with the content shared by their peers, with engagement in liking, commenting, or sharing ranging from 4.04 to 4.06, reflecting a collaborative and interactive environment.

Overall, the high mean scores for frequency of engagement, ranging from 3.99 to 4.04, highlight the active involvement of students in their respective open groups, including regularly checking for updates and content.

This consistent engagement indicates a positive trend in peer support dynamics across academic disciplines, emphasizing the role of social network sites in fostering collaboration and meaningful learning experiences. These findings suggest that while disciplinary cultures may influence levels of participation, the platforms serve as valuable spaces for knowledge exchange, fostering a sense of community and continuous interaction among students from diverse fields.

Table 6 provides insight into the differences in responses regarding the frequency of engagement among students in Education (BCEd), Engineering (BSIE), and Entrepreneurship (BSEnt) within open groups on social network sites.

TABLE VI DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF THE THREE GROUPS TOWARDS THE FREQUENCY OF ENGAGEMENT OF THE RESPONDENTS IN AN OPEN GROUP ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

Sources	SS	df	MS	F	P value	F crit	Interpretation
Between Groups	0.007693	2	0.003847	0.268	0.769	3.885	Statistically Not Significant
Within Groups	0.17224	12	0.014353				
Total	0.179933	14	0.012852				

The ANOVA results reveal that there is no statistically significant difference in the frequency of engagement across the three academic disciplines (Education, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship) at Quezon City University, as indicated by an F-statistic of 0.268 and a p-value of 0.769, which is higher than the critical F value of 3.885. This suggests that despite differences in the nature and types of peer support, the overall frequency of engagement within open groups on social network sites is consistent across disciplines. These findings highlight the need for further exploration into the factors influencing engagement to better understand the dynamics of peer support in these groups.

The findings from the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) highlight the intricate relationship between the frequency of engagement in open groups on social network sites and the overall experience and benefits of peer support for students in Education, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship at Quezon City University. Regular participation in group discussions was found to enhance students' sense of belonging and foster stronger connections, with many participants describing the virtual community as a supportive family. This emphasizes the importance of frequent engagement in creating a cohesive, supportive space that contributes to students' overall well-being and sense of community.

Posting content was another key aspect of engagement that participants identified as crucial for enhancing their peer support experience. Sharing personal experiences and valuable resources allowed students to contribute to the collective knowledge pool, reinforcing the idea of mutual benefit within the community. This two-way street of giving and receiving support was seen as fulfilling, enabling students to not only help others but also gain valuable insights and assistance in return. The active sharing of content highlighted the dynamic, interactive nature of peer support within these open groups.

Interacting with group content, such as commenting on posts and participating in discussions, was also viewed as an essential aspect of engagement. Students described these interactions as ongoing conversations with understanding peers, where advice, empathy, and shared experiences played a central role. This engagement fostered deeper connections and contributed to the supportive atmosphere of the group, reinforcing the reciprocal nature of support that enhances the overall community experience. It also illustrated the varying ways in which students from different academic disciplines engage in discussions, each contributing to the group's collective strength.

Regular check-ins emerged as a self-care ritual for participants, with many noting the importance of consistent

involvement in maintaining a sense of stability and connection within the community. Students emphasized how checking in allowed them to stay informed, provide support, and maintain relationships, especially during challenging times. This regular engagement not only helped students stay grounded but also reinforced the sense of belonging and ongoing support, showing that consistent involvement is integral to maintaining a supportive online community.

Consistent engagement was identified as a key factor in maximizing the benefits of peer support. Participants noted that regularly engaging with the group allowed them to better understand diverse perspectives, contributing to a deeper sense of connection and mutual support. This proactive approach to well-being helped students benefit not only from the support they received but also from the collective wisdom shared within the community. The findings underscore the importance of ongoing participation in strengthening the bonds within open groups and enhancing the overall peer support experience.

Overall, the study underscores that the frequency of engagement in open groups significantly impacts the peer support experience among students. Regular participation, posting content, interacting with others, checking in, and maintaining consistent involvement all contribute to a sense of belonging and the development of a supportive, collaborative environment. These patterns of engagement demonstrate how students across various disciplines actively contribute to and benefit from peer support, emphasizing the importance of social network sites as platforms for fostering meaningful connections and enhancing the student experience.

Table 7 outlines mean scores across five aspects for three academic disciplines: Education (BECed), Engineering (BSIE), and Entrepreneurship (BSEnt).

TABLE VII PERCEIVED BENEFITS FROM AN OPEN GROUP ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

Perceived Benefits		Program									Over-all Mean	V.I
		BECEd			BSIE			BSEnt				
		X	SD	V.I	X	SD	V.I	X	SD	V.I		
1.	Participation in the group enhances my knowledge on relevant topics.	3.82	0.81	A	3.94	0.86	A	3.95	0.82	A	3.90	A
2.	The group provides valuable networking opportunities with like-minded individuals.	4.12	0.86	A	3.86	0.86	A	4.03	0.81	A	4.00	A
3.	Involvement in the group contributes to the development of my skills.	3.94	0.83	A	3.96	0.84	A	4.05	0.84	A	3.98	A
4.	The group supports my professional growth and advancement.	4.00	0.87	A	4.01	0.79	A	4.12	0.80	A	4.04	A
5.	The group offers opportunities for collaboration on projects or initiatives.	4.18	0.81	A	3.96	0.82	A	3.92	0.81	A	4.02	A
Over-all Mean		4.01	0.82	A	3.97	0.83	A	4.01	0.82	A	4.00	A

The study reveals that students from Education, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship at Quezon City University perceive notable benefits from their participation in open groups on social network sites. All three groups expressed strong agreement regarding the enhancement of knowledge, with mean scores ranging from 3.82 to 3.95. Additionally, they recognized the value of networking opportunities, with scores ranging from 3.86 to 4.12, highlighting the importance of connecting with peers who share similar interests. Participation in these groups was also seen as an avenue for skill development, with mean scores ranging from 3.94 to 4.05, and as beneficial for professional growth, with scores ranging from 4.00 to 4.12. Furthermore, students found these groups conducive to collaboration, with scores ranging from 3.92 to 4.18, indicating the opportunity for joint projects and initiatives.

Overall, the mean scores for the perceived benefits of participating in these open groups were consistently high, ranging from 4.00 to 4.01 across all disciplines. These findings highlight that students in different academic disciplines view open groups on social network sites as valuable for knowledge exchange, networking, skill development, professional growth, and collaboration. The results align with literature on the

role of social networks in informal learning, professional connections, and career advancement. They also suggest that these virtual communities play an important role in fostering peer support and academic engagement within the university environment.

Table 8 provides an analysis of the differences in responses regarding perceived benefits from participating in open groups on social network sites among students in Education (BECed), Engineering (BSIE), and Entrepreneurship (BSEnt).

TABLE VIII DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF THE THREE GROUPS TOWARDS THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS FROM AN OPEN GROUP ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

Sources	SS	df	MS	F	P value	F crit	Interpretation
Between Groups	0.014973	2	0.007487	0.750	0.493	3.885	Statistically Not Significant
Within Groups	0.11972	12	0.009977				
Total	0.134693	14	0.009621				

The ANOVA results indicate no statistically significant differences in the perceived benefits of participating in open groups on social network sites among students in Education, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship at Quezon City University, with an F-statistic of 0.750 and a p-value of 0.493. This suggests that while there may be slight variations in the mean scores for different benefits, the overall perception of the advantages of these virtual communities remains consistent across the three academic disciplines. The lack of statistical significance highlights the shared understanding and positive view of the benefits derived from engagement in these open groups, reinforcing their role in fostering peer support and academic engagement within the university.

The focus group discussions (FGD) revealed that students at Quezon City University, particularly in the fields of education, engineering, and entrepreneurship, perceive multiple benefits from participating in open groups on social network sites. One prominent benefit is knowledge acquisition, as participants described these groups as a "treasure trove" of diverse experiences that broaden their perspectives. The exchange of knowledge within these communities positively influences decision-making and problem-solving skills, facilitating continuous learning and enhancing students' educational experiences. This aligns with the comparative study's objective of exploring the value of such open groups in various academic disciplines.

Networking opportunities were also highlighted as a key advantage of participating in these groups. Students emphasized the value of connecting with like-minded individuals and professionals, leading to meaningful conversations, collaborations, and even career opportunities. The networking platform within these groups was described as powerful, contributing to both professional and personal growth. The qualitative findings suggest that networking within these virtual communities fosters genuine relationships that support holistic well-being, reinforcing the importance of these groups in enhancing students' social and professional networks.

Skill development emerged as another significant benefit, with participants acknowledging the role of open groups in facilitating the acquisition of new techniques, honing existing skills, and receiving constructive feedback. These communities were described as continuous learning platforms, where students could stay updated on industry trends and receive guidance for professional development. The supportive environment within these groups enables participants to enhance their competencies, preparing them for future career success and promoting their ongoing personal and professional growth.

Professional growth was directly linked to participation in open groups, with students citing mentorship and advice from experienced members as crucial in overcoming career challenges and achieving milestones. The insights and guidance offered by seasoned members were seen as instrumental in helping participants navigate

the complexities of their career paths. These findings underscore the transformative impact of peer support in open groups, where students gain practical insights and mentorship that contribute to their professional development and career advancement.

Collaborative opportunities were frequently mentioned as a significant benefit of open groups, with students appreciating the mutual support and shared goals that fostered impactful partnerships and joint projects. The collaborative environment within these communities enhances both individual endeavours and the collective success of the group. This aspect of open groups demonstrates how students from different disciplines benefit from cooperation, mutual trust, and shared objectives, contributing to their academic and personal development.

Overall, the perceived benefits of participating in open groups on social network sites positively impact personal growth, emotional well-being, and the sense of community within these groups. The findings from the FGDs highlight the rich and diverse experiences of students, emphasizing the holistic impact of peer support. These benefits, including knowledge acquisition, networking, skill development, professional growth, and collaboration, reinforce the value of virtual communities in supporting students' academic engagement and overall well-being across various disciplines.

Challenges Encountered

Table 9 illustrates mean scores for five distinct challenges faced by students in Education (BECed), Engineering (BSIE), and Entrepreneurship (BSEnt).

TABLE IX CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN AN OPEN GROUP ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

Challenges Encountered	Program									Over-all Mean	V.I
	BECed			BSIE			BSEnt				
	X	SD	V.I	X	SD	V.I	X	SD	V.I		
1. The group experiences information overload, making it challenging to filter through content.	4.18	0.81	A	4.06	0.85	A	3.96	0.80	A	4.07	A
2. The group suffers from a lack of effective moderation, leading to issues with inappropriate content or behavior.	4.08	0.97	A	4.03	0.80	A	3.92	0.80	A	4.01	A
3. Members express concerns about privacy and data security within the group.	4.18	0.81	A	4.04	0.78	A	4.00	0.79	A	4.07	A
4. The group faces issues with the presence of spam or irrelevant content.	4.18	0.88	A	3.97	0.76	A	3.90	0.78	A	4.02	A
5. Some members encounter challenges that lead to disengagement from the group.	4.18	0.73	A	4.08	0.84	A	3.94	0.82	A	4.07	A
Over-all Mean	4.15	0.82	A	4.04	0.80	A	3.95	0.80	A	4.05	A

Students across Education, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship at Quezon City University reported several challenges within open groups on social network sites. The most prominent issues included information overload, with students struggling to filter through abundant content, and concerns about ineffective moderation, which led to the presence of inappropriate content or behaviour. Privacy and data security also emerged as significant concerns, with students expressing the need for a secure environment to engage without

fear of their personal information being compromised. Furthermore, the prevalence of spam or irrelevant content was identified as a challenge, highlighting the necessity for better content curation and moderation to ensure the quality and relevance of the information shared. Lastly, many students pointed to factors contributing to disengagement, such as content overload and lack of interest, which may impact their willingness to actively participate in these online communities.

The overall mean scores for these challenges were consistently high, ranging from 3.95 to 4.15, indicating that students across all disciplines shared a strong recognition of these issues. These challenges align with concerns raised in previous research, emphasizing the need for improved management strategies to address information overload, ensure effective moderation, protect privacy, curate content, and prevent disengagement. Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing the peer support experience within open groups, helping to create a more focused, supportive, and engaging environment for students. By recognizing and mitigating these obstacles, educational institutions can optimize the effectiveness of online communities in fostering student growth and engagement.

Table 10 presents an analysis of the differences in responses concerning challenges encountered within open groups on social network sites among students in Education (BECed), Engineering (BSIE), and Entrepreneurship (BSEnt).

TABLE X DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF THE THREE GROUPS TOWARDS THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN AN OPEN GROUP ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

Sources	SS	df	MS	F	P value	F crit	Interpretation
Between Groups	0.117493	2	0.058747	33.827	0.000	3.885	Statistically Significant
Within Groups	0.02084	12	0.001737				
Total	0.138333	14	0.009881				

The ANOVA results reveal a highly significant difference in the challenges faced by students in Education, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship at Quezon City University within open groups on social network sites, with an F-statistic of 33.827 and a p-value of 0.000, far below the critical F value of 3.885. This indicates that students in these disciplines encounter distinct challenges, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The findings highlight the importance of tailored interventions and support mechanisms to address the unique challenges of each group, such as information overload, moderation issues, privacy concerns, content relevance, and disengagement factors. Understanding these discipline-specific challenges is crucial for educational institutions to implement targeted strategies that enhance the effectiveness of peer support and foster more engaging and supportive online communities.

The Focus Group Discussions (FGD) conducted with students from Education, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship at Quezon City University revealed several challenges faced when participating in open groups on social network sites. These challenges significantly affect the overall experience and effectiveness of peer support within these communities. Notable issues include information overload, lack of effective moderation, privacy concerns, spam and irrelevant content, and member disengagement, which together shape the dynamics and success of these online platforms.

Information overload was identified as a common struggle, with students finding it difficult to navigate the large volume of content in the groups. While the wealth of knowledge was appreciated, participants expressed that the overwhelming amount of information made it challenging to focus on the most relevant and useful content. This issue suggests the need for strategies to streamline discussions and help participants filter content based on relevance, improving their ability to engage effectively.

The lack of effective moderation was another significant challenge. Without proper oversight, off-topic discussions, conflicts, and the dominance of certain voices were common problems. Participants emphasized that moderation is crucial to maintaining a healthy group dynamic and ensuring the quality of peer support. The absence of moderation could affect the cohesion and focus of the group, hindering the supportive environment that students seek within these online communities.

Privacy concerns were also highlighted as a recurring issue, with students expressing unease about sharing personal experiences in a public setting without control over who sees the information or how it might be used. The balance between openness and privacy was seen as a delicate challenge, suggesting that mechanisms for ensuring privacy could enhance trust and participation within these groups. Students indicated that privacy settings or clearer guidelines could help mitigate these concerns and foster a more comfortable space for sharing.

Spam and irrelevant content were further challenges that participants faced, which detracted from the quality of discussions and made it harder to find valuable information. Students recognized the importance of maintaining a balance between inclusivity and quality control, noting that managing irrelevant content requires continuous effort. Effective moderation and community guidelines were suggested as solutions to help ensure that the focus remains on meaningful exchanges, improving the overall user experience.

Member disengagement emerged as another noteworthy challenge, with students observing a decline in participation over time. While initial enthusiasm was high, sustained engagement was difficult to maintain, leading to a diminished sense of community. This disengagement affected the vibrancy of the groups and the depth of support offered. Understanding the factors contributing to disengagement and implementing strategies to encourage consistent participation were seen as essential for maintaining the effectiveness of these online communities.

In conclusion, the challenges identified in the FGD—information overload, lack of moderation, privacy concerns, spam and irrelevant content, and member disengagement—reflect the complexities of managing peer support in open groups on social network sites. These issues vary across academic disciplines but have a shared impact on the effectiveness of these platforms. Addressing these challenges is crucial for optimizing peer support and ensuring that open groups provide a meaningful and supportive experience for students in diverse fields.

DISCUSSION

The comparative study at Quezon City University explored peer support dynamics within open groups on social network sites among students from education, engineering, and entrepreneurship disciplines. The findings revealed that students across all disciplines shared common experiences in areas such as information sharing, fostering community, and celebrating achievements. BECED students reported the highest mean scores for sharing valuable experiences, while motivational support and skill-building activities received the highest scores across all groups. ANOVA results showed significant differences in how peer support was perceived, emphasizing the need for tailored strategies for different disciplines. The focused group discussions highlighted the importance of diverse forms of peer support, including informational, social, experiential, and motivational support, in contributing to students' well-being.

The study also examined peer support aspects across disciplines, revealing notable strengths and areas for improvement. While overall mean scores ranged from 3.24 to 3.49, indicating a neutral stance, BSEnt students scored the highest, suggesting discipline-specific variations in experiences. Notable strengths included responsiveness to inquiries and collaborative problem-solving, while group interactions focused on encouragement and motivation were categorized as neutral, indicating an opportunity for improvement. The consistent positive response to the sharing of helpful resources reinforced the collaborative nature of these online communities. The findings pointed to the importance of addressing motivational elements and enhancing group cohesion, particularly for encouraging engagement and maintaining a supportive environment.

Further analysis on engagement patterns showed that while students across disciplines were actively involved in discussions and content sharing, there were variations in participation levels. Engineering students demonstrated the highest mean scores for actively participating in discussions, while education students were more proactive in posting content. Despite these differences, overall engagement frequency remained consistent across disciplines, as indicated by the lack of statistically significant differences in ANOVA results. The focused group discussions emphasized the role of regular participation and interaction in fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support. Additionally, the perceived benefits of participating in open groups, such as knowledge enhancement, networking opportunities, and skill development, were consistently positive across disciplines. However, the study also revealed common challenges, including information overload, lack of effective moderation, privacy concerns, and spam-related issues, which impacted the overall experience. Recognizing discipline-specific challenges and tailoring interventions accordingly will be crucial for optimizing peer support and enhancing the effectiveness of online communities at the university.

CONCLUSION

The present study offers valuable insights into the dynamics of peer support within open groups on social networking sites across different academic disciplines, including education, engineering, and entrepreneurship. It reveals that students generally agree on the effectiveness of information sharing, fostering a sense of community, and celebrating achievements within their groups. However, challenges like information overload, moderation issues, and privacy concerns were universally acknowledged, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to optimize the use of these platforms. Despite discipline-specific variations, the overall perception of benefits and challenges remained consistent, highlighting shared experiences across disciplines. The study also underscores the importance of tailoring peer support strategies to meet the unique needs of students in each academic field.

The study further emphasizes the need for nuanced approaches to peer support, given the discipline-specific differences in experiences. Statistical analysis revealed significant variations in how students perceived peer support, while focused group discussions provided a deeper understanding of the different forms of support, including informational, social, and motivational support. The research also highlights the importance of fostering active engagement in online communities and addressing challenges such as information overload and privacy concerns. Based on these findings, the study recommends that administrators and educators tailor strategies to align with discipline-specific needs, promote active participation, and implement measures to mitigate challenges. By doing so, Quezon City University can enhance its peer support systems, fostering a collaborative learning environment that benefits students across all academic disciplines.

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