



Imagining the First View as an Artist: lessons in organizing creative workshops

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Abstract. Abstract Through the recent improvement of technology access in the Philippine arena, more and more ways for teachers and students to come together in a virtual setting made possible for all. Each learner has the capacity to realize the power of being an artist for self-empowerment and for reaching out to others who do not realize yet their own skills. Especially, the art of photography continues to evolve in the world of digital humanities innovative projects involving the use of photos continue to emerge. The conduct of a virtual workshop in photography served as the platform to reach out to young students-artists, practitioners, enthusiasts, who wish to enhance their skills. It was a venue of artistic engagements, sharing of ideas and experimenting with photography in order to reach a higher level of expression of this art form which was hoped to contribute to the expansion of digital humanities all over the country and the world. This current paper determined the influence of photography in learning and teaching process. Specifically, this would: 1) identify the level of proficiency of the participants; 2) determine how photography influenced the lives of the participants, and 3) assess the composition based on emotion and angle of selected output. Results showed that 33% of the participants had proficient to expert level in photography, 43% had competent skills while 24% belonged to the novice and advanced beginner level. A sizable majority of respondents thought that photography helped their careers, made them happier, or brought them new friends; made possible by maximizing the use of learning platforms and resources that were widely available and easily accessible by stakeholders. It is because of these perceived benefits that the majority of the respondents decided to attend the virtual workshop “for personal growth”. This study presented more information and lessons about the importance of including trainings on art forms such as photography in educational spaces and academic institutions for the benefit of students and their enrichment as artists.

Keywords: artistic output, creative workshops, educational trainings

1 Introduction

Over the years, with the rapid advancements in technology, the field of digital humanities has expanded, which has also led to the development of the art of photography. When integrated with a structured learning environment, artistic expression can be a useful tool to inspire inquiry and experimentation as well as critical thinking. As photos play an important role in many digital humanities projects, digital photography has come to be further practiced and appreciated as a form of visual art (Puppe et al., 2020). Thus, it is important for any budding, practicing or expert photographer to understand how they should make full use of their technical skills and creativity in a responsible and conscious manner to enrich themselves as artists and contribute to the expansion of digital humanities all over the country and the world. As Walmsley (2016) strongly indicated that responsive digital platforms can democratize critical exchange; foster slower, more reflective critique; and positively shift perceptions of unfamiliar artforms among the learners thereby hasten perhaps the process of co-creating. Through this form of visual art which has the power to express feelings and tell stories in one shot, anyone can be considered an artist. That being said, it is essential for any budding, practicing or expert photographer to understand how to make full use of their skills and creativity in a responsible and conscious manner through the art of digital photography.

Furthermore, this digital workshops emphasized motivating students to approach problems from a novel perspective, imagining novel possibilities, and investigating alternate viewpoints (Bresler, 2010; Holme & Ashley, 2018). Overall, this provided a distinctive and captivating method of teaching and learning that places an emphasis on imagination, creativity, and innovation.

The general aim of the paper was to determine the influence of digital workshops in the lives of participants. Specifically, it would 1) identify the level of knowledge in photography of the participants; 2) determine how photography influenced the lives of the participants; and 3) determine the composition based on emotion and angle to enhance output was applied.

2 Method

A virtual workshop in digital photography was conducted, where two resource speakers taught participants about the proper and effective gadgets, settings and techniques to use in capturing and editing great photos, such as the use of color contrast and proper exposure. Afterwards, an online survey was sent to all participants which contained questions about their own personal experiences with photography. The data collected was sorted and analyzed by means of statistical and descriptive analysis. A total of 188 participants responded to the survey (Table 1).

Table 1. The sociodemographic profile of the workshop participants.

PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS	
SEX	frequency %

Male	68	36%
Female	118	63%
Prefer not to say	2	1%
Total	188	100%
CLASSIFICATION		
Student	70	37.2%
Teacher	46	24.5%
Office support	25	13.3%
Other professionals	47	25%
Total	188	100%

3 Results And Discussion

3.1 Photography Knowledge of Participant

The current digital world constantly overwhelms the eyes with images that are so appealing that one can be persuaded to make purchases merely by glancing at them. Eyes need to be trained in order to decipher the projected image vs reality. Figure 1 displays the five classification of the participants as they perceived themselves.

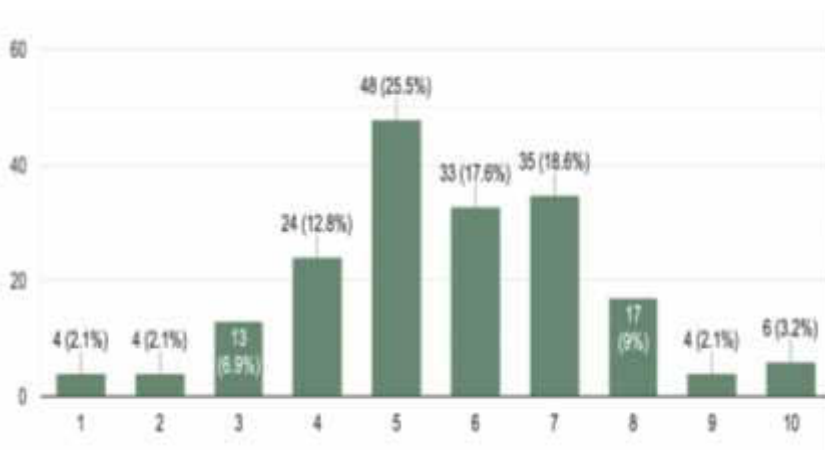


Fig. 1. Level of photography skills of the digital workshop participants.(Legend: 1-2 Novice, 3-4 Advanced beginner, 5-6 Competent, 7-8 Proficient, and 9-10 Expert)

On the scale, 1 and 2 refer to the novice category, where 4.2% or 8 people belong, who just started photography due to either the availability of the gadget or it being a newfound hobby. The Advanced beginner, which refers to the scores of 3 and 4, those who belong here illustrate more knowledge in photography but still have limited experiences in the field. With this, 19.7% of the participants have more or less been doing more tasks in photography. It was found that a total of 81 participants rated their own level of expertise or proficiency in the field of photography as 5-6, meaning that 43.1% out of the 188 respondents are “competent” with photography, which means that

they are more well-versed in the field and practice this often. For 7-8, this is the proficient category, which refers to those who have more than enough knowledge in the field and practice this on a daily basis, which makes up 27.6% of the participants. For the last category of 9-10 which is expert, this means that the participants already have advance knowledge and experience in photography, regularly practicing this as a hobby or profession and who are earning income from this; which makes up 5.3% of the participants.

Majority of the participants (43.1%) judged themselves as belonging to the competent category attended the workshop to improve their photography skills and be eventually classified as “proficient” and “expert.”

3.2 Photography as Life Influencer

The various forms of thinking are evoked, developed, and refined through the arts (Eisner, 2002; Walsley, 2013). It was found that based on the number of attendees of the workshop alone, photography has a significant influence on the lives of the participants (Fig 2.). This is further supported by the reasons they shared for joining the workshop, where the reason, “for personal growth” was chosen by 82.4% of the respondents. The data clearly showed that photography is indeed in the lives of the respondents.

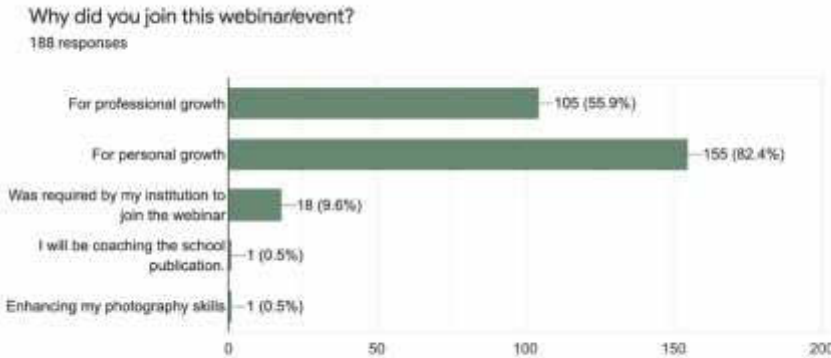


Fig. 2. Reasons of participants in joining the digital workshop.

as it is used to retain memories over time, in turn enhancing one’s own personal connections with others and their self through such material recollections. In addition, because it is used as a tool for expression. Through photography, the respondents are allowed to tell their own stories, form their own identities, and build communities. They are able to control how and what they communicate and share with the rest of the world with each photograph; a result of navigating the language of events (Berger, 2013).

In addition, the majority also believe that photography will benefit them as a person, make them richer, enrich their life and career, give them friends, and make them happy, as shown in figure 3. This is aligned with the conclusion of Kislinger and Kotschal

(2021) that photography has become a human universal, as people continue to use photography as a social coping strategy and new way of representing experiences and ideas. Aside from the benefits, the participants also shared personal reasons and interests why they continue to engage in photography. Given that the majority at 54.3% of the respondents stated that they practiced photography as a personal hobby, they indeed consider photography as an integral activity of their daily lives. That is perhaps why the majority of the participants at 52.7% were influenced by their own selves to keep on practicing photography. In fact, respondents expressed that they are willing to pursue the art of photography even beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, when the workshop and this research were conducted. This clearly exhibited the desires of online learners to continuously find real purpose of their hobby (Buot & Fama, 2022).

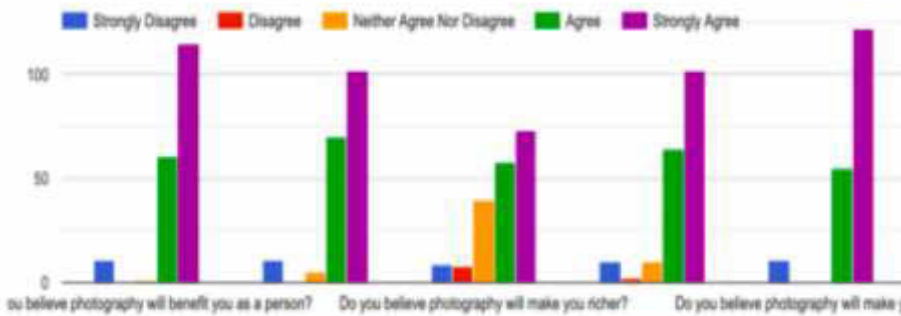


Fig. 3. Benefits of doing photography.

That is perhaps why the majority of the participants at 52.7% were influenced by their own selves to keep on practicing photography (Fig. 4). In fact, respondents even expressed that they are willing to pursue the art of photography even beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

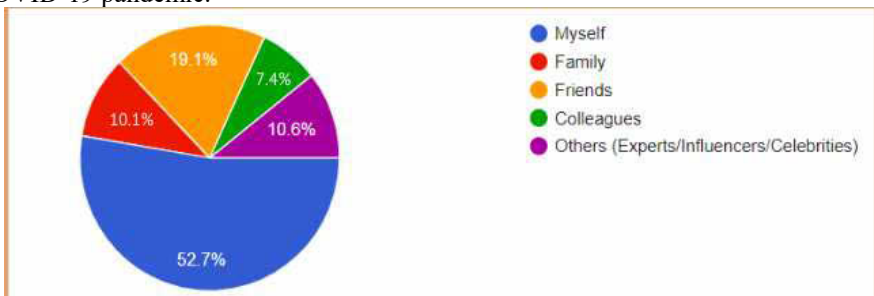


Fig. 4. Significant influencer to pursue photography.

3.3 Composition: Emotion and Angle.

Composition allows the photographer to convey the message and emotion of a certain picture or image. As an artist, the photographer has access to various elements and techniques of design, such as framing and use of symmetrical and asymmetrical balance, among others. In addition, the photographer has the freedom to select the specific elements and techniques to be used for a specific subject, thereby creating a powerful, memorable photo. Photo outputs submitted by the participants before and after the workshop were analyzed by looking at the emotion and angle. By applying what they learned from the resource speakers, the participants were able to create powerful and memorable photos by applying clever techniques in angling their subjects and conveying emotions through the use of color contrast and correct exposure, as seen in the second photos.

Here, the original photo taken before the workshop was improved, as shown in the after photo, by the exploration and application of the contrast of colors in the photo which are pink and green; complementary colors (Figure 5). The image also took advantage of the spatial and temporal editing through the use of correct exposure in terms of ISO, shutter speed, and aperture, resulting in a more vibrant photo of a colorful flower exuding fun and playfulness.



Fig. 5. Gumamela flower to show contrast by Ricardo Baldovino.

This is also seen in this second set of photos, where the photo taken after the workshop reveals better color contrasts and detail differences, giving it a touch of elegance and mystery (Figure 6). The light and dark contrasts help to elevate the subject and to draw our attention into the picture. The use of background and texture add more details as well as mystery to the photos making them more interesting and engaging. Overall, the pictures evoke a feeling of peace and oneness with nature.

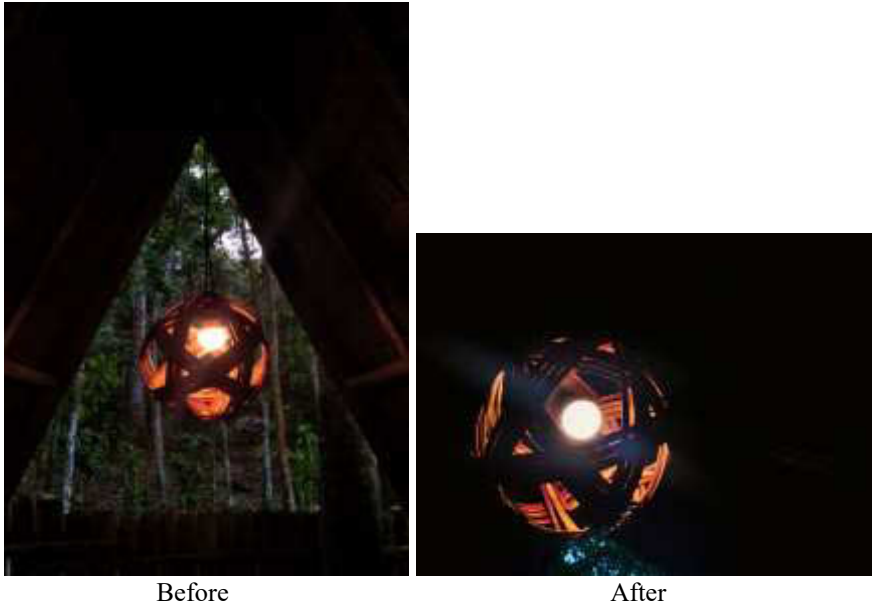


Fig. 6. Framing and cropping as shown in "A Simple Chandelier" and "The Light Inside" by Bianca Ysabel Abrencillo.

"GByEssential" is another example of a simple photo at first glance, but surprisingly, it features several elements and techniques of design when examined by a trained eye (Figure 7). Upon closer inspection, the images reveal the use of framing, cropping, and black-and-white filters, to name a few. The end product is a picture of subtle colors evoking a feeling of peace and serenity. Sometimes, a good photo doesn't need colors to convey its message and meaning.



Fig. 7. The use of black and white of "GByEssential" by Sarah Rochelle Aldana.

4 Conclusion

It was found that a total of 81(43.1%) participants rated their own level of expertise or proficiency in the field of photography as “competent” with photography, which means that they are more well-versed in the field and practice this often. While there were experts in the participants but a novice and beginner (23.4%) was also present. Photography has greatly benefited, impacted, and influenced the lives of majority of the attendees. More accessible trainings and workshops on digital literacy should also be organized and conducted, which will increase awareness on the huge role photography plays in the modern world. Creating more awareness regarding the use of gadgets and the aid of technology will surely help pave way for more openness and collaboration.

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