INTRODUCTION

Increase of students’ achievement in Physics is one of the goals of Physics education in the Philippines (Torio, 2015). However, many students find Physics to be a difficult subject which leads to their low achievement and poor performance in the subject (Aina, 2013). This led Physics educators to identify the underlying cause of students’ poor achievement and it was found out that students’ conceptual understanding (Aysegül and Devecioglu, 2010) and motivation (Torio, 2015) are two of the factors that should be considered to attain optimal achievement rate in Physics.

Studies have shown that students find it difficult to understand Physics concepts (Aysegül and Devecioglu, 2010) which include topics about force, acceleration, laws of motion, and work-energy theorem (Atasoy, 2008; Bayraktar, 2006). These topics have been viewed by students from high school to college as abstract concepts which are difficult to learn (Atasoy and Akdeniz, 2005). In addition to that, students were found out to have low motivation toward learning physics because of the long-time undesirable reputation of physics as a difficult subject and the computational demands in learning physics (Torio, 2015). In an effort to address these problems, the use of comic-based learning module in Physics that suit today’s generation of students was developed (Adesoji, 2008).

Comics as an art can generally be seen in daily newspapers that are typically colorful or black and white with words and images (Muzumdar, 2016). It is generally underrated as an educational tool as it is frequently seen as nothing more than a pastime, yet studies in different fields have shown that it can be more than just a mere pastime (Tatalovic, 2009). In fact, there are growing number of studies on the use of comics as a tool in the fields of medicine, communication, art, business, and education (Cheesman, 2006). In addition to these, studies on the use of comics as a pedagogical tool for teaching and learning date back to the 1940’s have shown desirable educational outcomes such as (1) development of reading and writing skills, (2) enrichment of subject vocabulary, (3) development of problem-solving skills, (4) strengthening motivation, (5) acquisition of scientific knowledge, and (6) detection and elimination of misconceptions (Bolton-Gary, 2012). Also noted by Affeldt et al. (2018), the use of comics in science education suits today’s students’ media experiences better than the traditional text-based learning as its content contains short messages set in meaningful context created by specific images.

According to Muzumdar (2016), there are certain characteristics of comics that distinguish them from other learning materials and other media. Such characteristics of comics are (1) comics are narrative, (2) comics have juxtaposed panels, and (3) comics are permanent. Comics are a storytelling device that narrate stories in either a humorous or serious context and are presented in the form of pictures and text. The narrative in comics is presented in a sequence of frames or panels with the following: Word or speech balloons, caption outside the panel,
LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Comics Development
The art of comics began in the middle of the 19th century (Meskin, 2008) and its purpose is usually for caricature and humor used primarily for entertainment (Trnova et al., 2013). Bolton-Gary (2012) stated that the word comic comes from the Greek word “kōmōidía” which means “comedy” while Trnova et al. (2013) argued that the word comic comes from English word “comic strip” which means a strip of comic images. Some critics contend that comics are a hybrid from of art and literature while others argue that comics are a new and separate art (Arroio, 2011). Also reported by Arroio, 2011, comics are a graphic medium in which images are utilized to convey a sequential narrative using text ambiguity, symbolism, design, iconography, literary technique, and stylistic elements of art to build a subtext meaning. Other researchers define comics as a media visual used to express ideas through images combined with text to convey information (Hosler and Boomer, 2001); a form of art that uses no moving pictures which are arranged in such arrangement to build up story (Yulianti et al., 2016); and a sequential art associated with text telling of short stories (Tatalovic, 2009).

Comics evolved from a single image or a single-panel cartoon and when combined with two or more cartoons in a series, connected by the same idea or story, comics will be formed. An image is called a panel that is accompanied with text inserted into speech balloons to create the story of the comics (Trnova et al., 2013).

Comics in Science Education
In science education, the genre of comic books is called as “science comics” which aim to communicate science or to educate readers about science ideas (Muzumdar, 2016). In India, the popular form of science communication through comics is called “scientoons.” These comics contain cartoons accompanied by a dialogue of an Indian scientist and a science communicator about the different topics in science such as parasitology and Brownian movement. Another example of single-frame comics developed to improve physics education and public interest in science are called “concept cartoons” (Naylor and Keogh, 2010).

There is a body of literature which has determined the effect of comics in science education. In a study conducted by Ozdemir (2017), he found that a comics story implemented in his class contributed in simplifying the concepts and caused long-term learning due to its visual nature. Affeldt et al. (2018) added that the use of comics in a classroom setting has the potential of attracting learners to learn science and of motivating those with lower reading abilities to be more engaged in reading due to the simple language being used. Meanwhile Lin et al. (2015) revealed that students who used a comics book had developed an increased interest and enjoyment of learning while the participants who used a textbook had a decreased in their interest and enjoyment. Finally, Yulianti et al. (2016) showed that comics can be used as a powerful learning media to interpret the knowledge and application of science, because the use of images in comics in learning science is more stimulating and interesting than the sole explanation of scientific facts.

Research Questions
The study aimed to investigate the effect of using comic-based learning module on students’ conceptual understanding and motivation toward learning Physics. More specifically, this research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How effective is the use of comic-based learning module in enhancing students’ conceptual understanding and motivation as reflected on their pre-test and post-test scores and the interviews?

2. After the implementation of comic-based learning module, is there a significant increase on students’ conceptual understanding and motivation?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
A mixed method approach using a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design was used in this study. Quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test design is a research design used to provide information about the effects of a certain intervention before and after its implementation (Park et al., 2009). In this study, the researchers implemented a quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test design to describe the effects of the implementation of an intervention which was the comic-based learning module. In addition, quantitative data were gathered through the pre-test and posttest to describe the changes on students’ conceptual understanding and motivation toward learning Physics. Then, students’ interviews in the form of focused group discussion (FGD) were used as the qualitative data to further substantiate the results obtained from the quantitative data. FGD is a qualitative assessment technique used to discuss issues, problems, and experiences of a selected set of participants (Bennett et al., 2010). In this study, some students were selected to be interviewed to discuss their experiences throughout the implementation of comic-based learning module.

Research Locale and Participants
This study was conducted in a public school in Cavite, the Philippines. Convenient sampling technique was employed by the researchers in determining the participants of the study. Convenient sampling is a sampling technique used by researchers to collect data from a conveniently available group of participants (Lavrakas, 2008). In this study, one of the researchers was teaching Grade 8 students in a public school in Cavite, the Philippines which resulted to choosing her students...
as the participants of the study. Two intact classes with a total number of 68 students with age ranging from 12 to 14 years old in the school year 2018–2019 volunteered to participate in the conduct of this study with both their and their corresponding parental informed consent. Since the participants of this study were still minor students, consent forms were given to them and to their parents.

**Research Instruments**

The instruments used in this study were the following:

**Comic-based learning module**

The researcher developed a comic-based learning module in Physics. The module is composed of an introduction to Physics and lessons about forces, Newton’s Laws of Motion, work, and energy. The developed comic-based learning modules followed the facets of comics format framework of Collver and Weitkamp (2007).

**Achievement test**

Fifty multiple choices test items about Physics taken from the past 2 years’, first quarter periodic examination was used to measure students’ conceptual understanding. Each item was scored one point for every correct answer. The pre-test was administered prior the first lesson on the comic-based learning module and post-test with parallel test items with the pre-test was given after the integration of the module. Table 1 shows the number of items per lesson in the pre-test and post-test.

**Science motivation questionnaire-II (SMQ-II)**

In this study, the Physics version of the SMQ-II adapted from Glynn et al. (2011) was used. The SMQ-II is a 25-item Likert-type instrument with five components such as intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, self-determination, grade motivation, and career motivation developed and validated for efficiently investigating students’ motivation to learn physics. It has a range of 0–4 having a verbal interpretation of “never” for 0, “rarely” for 1, “sometimes” for 2, “often” for 3, and “always” for 4. Table 2 shows the five components of SMQ-II, number of statements per component and sample statement.

**Research Procedure**

The main focus of this study was to investigate the effect of using comics-based learning modules on students’ conceptual understanding and motivation toward learning Physics. To do this, researchers first secured a letter of permission that was addressed to the principal of school. This is to ensure the agreement between the researcher and the school administrator. Afterward, the following phases were followed:

**Phase 1: Pretest**

Before giving the comics-based learning module, the participants took a 50-item multiple choice test and SMQ-II to describe their initial conceptual understanding in Physics and motivation toward learning Physics, respectively.

**Phase 2: Integration**

The comics-based learning modules were used to teach Physics to two Grade 8 sections for four weeks. One week was allocated to two Grade 8 sections for four weeks. One week was allocated for the discussion of each lesson. Before the start of the class, students were given 10 min to read the comics-based learning module. During the discussion of the topics, the teacher used PowerPoint presentations that were also in the form of comics. Some contents of the module were also flashed in the PowerPoint presentation so that students would be engaged in the use of comics in the classroom.

**Phase 3: Post-test**

At the end of the integration, the participants took a test parallel to the pre-test that served as the posttest.

**Phase 4: Interview**

An interview with random students in the form of FGD was conducted to also substantiate the quantitative data gathered. Through a developed interview protocol, students were asked about their experience during the administration of comic-based learning module in their class.

**Data Analysis**

The effect of comics-based learning module on students’ conceptual understanding in Physics was investigated using the pre-test and post-test scores in the 50-item multiple choices test. Weighted mean, standard deviation, t-test for paired samples, and the effect size were used to describe the gathered data. Motivation toward learning physics was examined through the pre-test and post-test results of SMQ-II. t-test for paired samples and effect size were run on the data to describe the effects of the comic-based learning module to the students’ motivation toward learning Physics.

**FINDINGS**

**Comics-based Learning Module on Students’ Conceptual Understanding**

Table 3 shows the pre-test and post-test mean scores in the 50-item multiple choices test of the students who participated
in this study along with the standard deviation and t-value and p-value from the t-test and the effect size.

After the implementation of the comic-based learning module for 4 weeks, a significant increase (t(67) = 8.20, ρ < 0.05) on students’ conceptual understanding in Physics is revealed as shown in the difference between the pre-test scores (M = 23.13, SD = 5.66) and post-test scores (M = 29.21, SD = 3.07). The significant results obtained from the t-test were supported by the yielded large effect size with Cohen’s d equal to 1.00. This indicated that approximately, for every 3 students who used the module, there was one (1) who improved in terms of the knowledge the students gained. Here are some of the comments of students which describe how they see an increase in their conceptual understanding of the topics as coded from the interview:

“When comics were given to us, I felt that I could get a high score in a quiz and I could recite because I became more confident that my answers were correct.”

Table 3: Change on students’ conceptual understanding in physics

| Components Pretest | Pretest | Posttest | Posttest | t-Stat | ρ-value | Effect size (d) |
|-------------------|---------|----------|----------|--------|----------|----------------|
| mean              | SD      | Mean     | SD       |        |          |                |
| 23.13             | 5.66    | 29.21    | 3.07     | 8.20   | 0.00*    | 1.00           |

n=68, Highest score = 50, *p<0.05

Comics-based Learning Module on Students’ Motivation

Students’ motivation toward learning Physics was studied by comparing the mean pre-test and post-test scores of students the SMQ-II.

Table 4 shows the students’ pre-test and post-test mean scores in the five different components of motivation assessed using SMQ-II. Four of the components of students’ motivation: Intrinsic motivation (t(67) = 6.86, ρ < 0.05), self-efficacy (t(67) = 7.23, ρ < 0.05), self-determination (t(67) = 3.98, ρ < 0.05), and grade motivation (t(67) = 7.18, ρ < 0.05) showed significant increase while the career motivation (t(67) = 2.14, ρ > 0.05) did not show a significant increase. These results obtained from the t-test were supported by the yielded large effect size with Cohen’s d values equal to 0.83, 0.71, 0.82, and 0.92 for intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, self-determination, and grade motivation, respectively. Here are some of the comments of students which describe how they became motivated to learn Physics in their class:

“When Ma’am was asking us before, we could not answer her because we were not really reading books. But now, we were encouraged to read because of the jokes in the comics and we were able to recite as well.”

“Nung nagbasa po ako ng comics, nagenjoy po ako dahil sa mga jokes tapos nakakapagrecite pa po kami.”

Table 4: SMQ-II score summary

| Components Pretest mean | Posttest mean | t-Stat | ρ-value | Cohen’s d |
|-------------------------|---------------|--------|---------|-----------|
| Intrinsic motivation    | 2.69          | 3.17   | 6.86    | 0.002*    | 0.83      |
| Self-efficacy           | 2.86          | 3.18   | 7.23    | 0.002*    | 0.71      |
| Self-determination      | 2.76          | 3.10   | 3.98    | 0.016*    | 0.82      |
| Grade motivation        | 3.07          | 3.54   | 7.18    | 0.002*    | 0.92      |
| Career motivation       | 2.82          | 2.83   | 2.14    | 0.099     | 0.04      |

N=68 (Paired), Highest Score = 5, *p<0.05: SMQ: Science Motivation Questionnaire
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study are in agreement with Novianti and Syaichudin (2010) that using comics as a medium in learning science can increase students’ understanding. Waluyanto (2006) stated that comics-based material has a potential to convey messages in a coherent, clear, and fun way. Tatalovic (2009) also noted that it improved enjoyment of reading science due to its humorous nature of narrating science ideas. Finally, Di Rado (2006) added that comics with the visual appeal of the images made students to think about science concepts and related ideas in a visual entertaining way.

Glynn et al. (2011) describes intrinsic motivation as an innate satisfaction in learning science for its own sake. This improvement in the intrinsic motivation of the students can be attributed to the overall learning experience of the students while using the comic-based learning module and their linking of the concept of “fun” and “enjoyment” in Science. According to Guido (2013) students that demonstrate high intrinsic motivation processed reading material more deeply, achieved higher grades, and showed more persistence than students with high extrinsic motivation. As students achieve high intrinsic motivation, they will be more likely to attain better academic achievement, more favorable perceptions of their academic competence, and lower academic anxiety from childhood through their adolescence (Gottfried et al., 2001).

According to Schunk (2001 as cited by Suprato, 2017), self-efficacy is more like a task-dependent construct where its goal is to monitor students’ performance and capabilities to predict their learning outcomes accurately. It has also consistently been found to be a good predictor of academic achievement, study strategies, and persistence in the face of difficulty (Sharma and Branscum, 2009). The high self-efficacy of the students can be supported by the fact that students themselves are aware of the increase in their scores in written works and they anticipate upcoming tests and activities which they believe they can do well.

Self-determination is in accordance with the concept of basic psychological needs that are assumed to inherent and essential to fulfill growth and tendencies (Byman et al., 2012). These basic psychological needs are competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Glynn et al. (2011) describes grade motivation as an extrinsic motivation which involves learning science as a means to a tangible end, that is, a grade. Researchers believed that the reason why this dimension got the highest effect size among the SMQ-II components was that students became more motivated to participate in the class discussions and activities because extra points were given to them. During class discussions, researchers always asked questions to the students where answers could be seen from their module. Every time they were able to answer the questions, they were given extra points. In addition, every time the knowledge-based-assessment and the word problems in the modules were being answered in the class, almost all of the students were doing their best to get a perfect score.

The last component of motivation being assessed is the career motivation of the students which got the lowest effect size. Glynn et al. (2011) describes this component, similar to the grade motivation component, but the tangible end is the career. The not significant result and the low effect size in this component can be accounted to the fact that students at this early stage have not been thinking yet of the career path that they are going to take. Thus, they have not been thinking yet that learning Science will produce a tangible end, and that is their career.

Participants of the study have a significant increase in their conceptual understanding of the topics and their motivation after undergoing science classes with comics-based learning module. This result is greatly associated to the use of comics-based learning module as supported by the significant difference on the results of t-tests and students’ interview. Even though pedagogical content knowledge of teachers in teaching Physics plays a significant role in ensuring students’ learning, the comics-based learning module can still be considered as significant factor to teach Physics. After integrating the comics-based learning module, students found the use of it be enjoyable, convenient, and authentic. With this, the developed comics-based learning module might be one of the solutions to the problem on the lack of innovative instructional materials that meaningfully connect science contents to our daily experiences. Through this material, teachers might be encouraged to promote fun ways of learning through reading comics and students might have an improved perception of physics as well as better understanding of the physics topics and increase on their physics achievement.

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