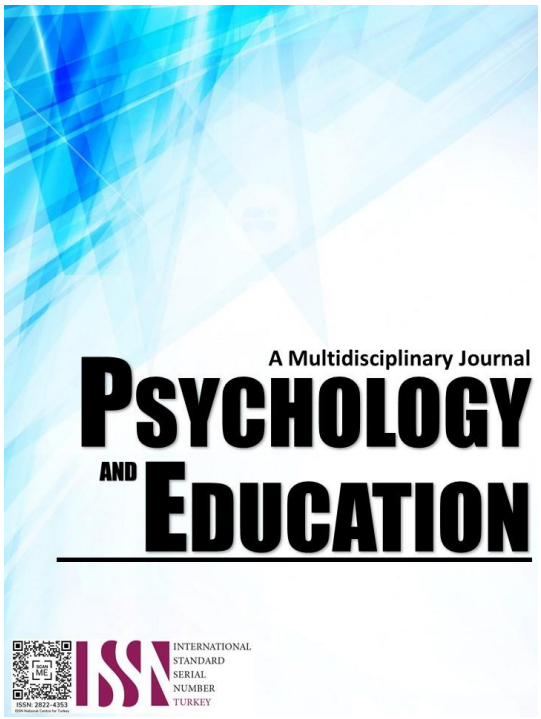
THE NEW NORMAL THROUGH THE LENSE OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY TEACHERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY



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Research Article

The New Normal Through the Lense of Public Elementary Teachers: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of public-school teachers at San Rafael Elementary School in the delivery of Modular Distance Learning in time of COVID-19 pandemic. By employing the qualitative-phenomenological study, the following themes occurred from the conversation partners who satisfy the inclusion criteria and voluntarily participated in the study; (a) the challenges of the teachers in the new normal which was based on the following subthemes: sentiments about being isolated at home; health related concerns of oneself and significant others; difficulty brought by the new learning modality; mental health of teachers; difficulty in balancing workload, pregnancy, and parenthood; communication barriers with significant others; exposure to physical exhaustion; and unreadiness and incompetence to teach of home learning partners; (b) teachers' response to the challenges which are taken from the following experiences: optimism among teachers; flexibility and adaptability of teachers; teachers' faithfulness to God; support from significant others; teachers as part of the solution; and coping mechanisms of teachers; (c) the positive side of the new normal of education was the third major theme identified in this research; (d) teachers' realizations composed of sense and fulfillment among teachers; learners' and parents' dedication; and teachers' expectations from the department of education. Rigors of findings were established using thick description for transferability, checking rechecking for confirmability, dependability, and member checking for credibility.

Keywords: *challenges, public school teachers, new normal, modular distance learning, phenemenology*

Introduction

Stress is known as any intrinsic or extrinsic stimulus that evokes a biological response. The compensatory responses to these stresses are known as stress responses. Stress can be either a triggering or aggravating factor for many diseases and pathological conditions (Yaribeygi et al., 2017). Although stress is considered normal and inevitable part in a person's life, still it has something to do with an individual's perception and capacity to handle things especially that there is the challenge of global health crisis.

One of the most recent public health emergencies of global concern is the recent COVID-19 pandemic which has brought uncertainties in the lives of people whom undeniably are dealing and struggling with stress. Oducado, Rabacal, Moralista and Tamdang (2021) emphasized that stress become an important concern in education since the COVID-19 outbreak. The study of Alves, Lopes, and Precioso (2020) on "Teachers well-being in times of Covid-19 pandemic: factors that explain in professional well-being", reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the well-being of teachers concerning their profession. For instance, a case study on the stress state of teachers and students in Stockholm, Sweden, revealed that any sudden change in the learning environment causes disparity and even depression across teachers (Ramberg, 2019). Therefore, majority of people are experiencing such undeniable difficulties and change brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, including teachers, whose purpose is to facilitate and deliver learning amidst these challenging times.

The COVID-19 outbreak may result in stress for a lot of people including tri-pillar of education system namely; students, teachers and parents as the pandemic has caused strong emotional responses such as sadness, fear, anxiety, feeling of helplessness, uncertainty, loss of interest and hopelessness among others. These changes are comprehensible with this emergency health crisis as it has resulted in an unexpected changes in their daily life activities. Stress levels might negatively affect teachers' efficacy and ability to educate students properly. Mental and emotional distractions were found to cause improper anger management and procrastination among teachers (Paras, Tus, Perante, Robosa, & Alvez, 2021). In fact, in Oducado et al. (2021) presented a moderate to a high proportion of stress among teachers and faculty members in low to middle-income countries like in Ethiopia (Kabito & Wami, 2020), and the Philippines (Pagayanan, 2016; Tan, 2017; Alson, 2019).

The global pandemic has led education to have a new method of teaching instead of face- to-face learning

and distance learning became an option to make it happen. Despite the distance learning is not a new thing to both students and teachers still it requires basic skills of computation and adaptation. The shifting of teaching methodology due to pandemic of Covid-19 had impacted school, university and other education provider across the world. Fast teaching and learning adaptation is highly needed (Almanar, 2020). Teachers are ones of those who most likely prone to stress due to their nature of work and now, it becomes more even challenging on their part to face this kind of switch as being the frontliners in education. As cited by De Villa & Manalo (2020), it was further explained that teachers who are new to distance learning may feel unprepared to facilitate teaching, thus, need support as to technical, pedagogical, and time management (Dyment, 2013). Hence, teachers play a vital role in the pursuit of quality education. However, the question is whether or not their mental health and well-being is protected to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of learning.

The Department of Education, with the active support and partnerships of various organizations has taken extra efforts to continue promote mental resiliency, among teachers and even those non-teaching personnel. They had launched a series of mental health and psychosocial support programs through online webinars aired to various social media platforms like Facebook and Youtube that aim to promote self-care during this time of the pandemic (Department of Education, 2021). This initiative had greatly contributed to the mental wellness of the teachers whom, in the reality of the situation are now more exposed to unnecessary stress affecting the extent of their productivity and performance.

Teachers are given high expectations in ensuring and in delivering quality education to learners. To meet this kind of expectation, they must be committed enough to fulfill their tasks, adapt and/or embrace changes in education sector, know how to manage stress in any circumstances and be aware of their mental health to contribute effectively to the sustainable growth, improvement and success of educational institutions. Mariotti, (2015) and Oducado et al, (2021) said that understanding stress is important because prolonged stress is associated with poor outcomes of mental and physical health.

The underlying problem motivated the researchers to conduct this study and they were able to identify and explore the lived experiences on stress and coping mechanisms of public school teachers particularly in San Rafael Elementary School in this time of pandemic and implementation of modular distance learning where the findings of this study could serve as baseline data for mental health awareness programs and additional knowledge.

Research Objective

This study generally aimed at exploring the lived experiences of public-school teachers of San Rafael Elementary School in the delivery of Modular Distance Learning in time of COVID- 19 pandemic.

Literature Review

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Teachers' Experiences of Stress

The global health crisis is breeding stress throughout the population and the widespread disease outbreak is associated with unfavorable mental health problems and adverse psychological issues (Nanjundaswamy et al., 2020). A Philippine-based study viewed the pandemic through education lenses, which revealed that teachers are not psychologically nor skill-prepared for the abrupt shift of learning modality in the country (Tria, 2020). Jimenez (2020) pointed out that teachers aside from the challenges that they encounter in everyday work, the rigors of students management and the mountain of paperwork, are also confronted with the task to exhibit positive work habits and high teaching performance.

Petrakova, et.al (2020) added that there are factors which aggravate teachers' stress caused by the transition to distance learning. These factors include the lack of psychological support from colleagues and administrators, increased workload caused by the need to look for new teaching methods, keeping in touch with students, intensified communication with parents, technical and information resources, and disrupted work-life-balance.

Moreover, Lie (2020) revealed that the strategies which were commonly used in face-to- face classes are not applicable in distance learning. Fear comes along as teachers has given an emerging sense of responsibilty to master and embrace technologies and explore essential ways so that they will be able to integrate these into their pedagogy and still perform and function their professional duties (Lie, 2020). High percentage of teachers who are not so expert in using technologies are challenged to this sudden change in education sector. Thus, as what Gustems-Carnicer et al., (2019) said teachers should be given

ample space and time to be relieved from stress through coping strategies and improve themselves as indispensable catalysts of the academic environment. Like other professionals, teachers experience stress and use avoidance of coping strategies, affecting their performance in the workplace. It is important to recognize and address the harmful effects of stress on well-being and academic achievement, to avoid long-term problems in professional and personal life.

As nations begin to emerge from 'lockdown', the collateral damage to human health caused by these restrictions has taken center stage, and mental health issues, particularly stress-related conditions and outcomes, are distinguished among them. The health threat posed by the spread of COVID-19, and serious concerns about its effects on people represents a substantive source of stress itself. Beyond this, the social effects of the lockdown measures such as concerns over availability of food and household goods and social isolation also present as important stressors (Hagger, Keech & Hamilton, 2020).

Many teachers have found it difficult to teach and care for students during the COVID-19 pandemic, and its effects on their physical health, mental health and well-being (MHWB) should be of considerable concern on a national and international level. By cooperating more and ensuring better access to social support networks, policymakers and practitioners can assist teachers with their MHWB. The support for teachers and, by extension, the educational system during and after the epidemic will be greatly aided by these conversations and provisions (Kim et al., 2022).

Coping Strategies of Teachers amid Pandemic and Modular Distance Learning

A teacher's use of coping responses to stressors is an important determinant of a teacher's psychological adjustment and overall well-being. The degree to which a teacher experiences stress in a situation is linked on a variety of factors, including the following: "appraisal of demands and the teacher's strategies to manage them"; and "expectations of possible upcoming demands and the teacher's readiness to handle them;" as well as "the teacher's degree of skill preparedness and practice in handling demands effectively" (MacIntyre et al., 2020, as cited in D'Mello, 2021).

A high level of social support protects teenagers' psychological outcomes from the detrimental effects of self-isolation, according to the literature. The results showed that higher reported teacher support at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic protected against the bad effects of self-isolation, while lower perceived teacher support enhanced these associations. The findings could guide the creation of policies for tactics to enhance adolescent health outcomes during the COVID-19 crisis and other pandemics (Wright & Wachs, 2021).

Teachers utilize a variety of coping stategies or mechanisms against stress and mitigate its consequences. One of them consists in looking for the silver lining and/or new opportunities in the situation, or positive re-appraisal—an example of emotion-focused coping according to Lazarus and Folkman's theory (Petrakova et al., 2021). Furthermore, based on the summarized findings of Talidong and Toquero (2020), there are several coping mechanisms and practices teachers employ while dealing with stress during pandemic. Some of these include, spending quality time with their families, seeking spiritual guidance, communicating with their friends/colleagues, discovering new hobbies and spending more time in social media.

Additionally, teachers are also challenged due to the implementation of modular distance learning. Castroverde & Acala (2021) reported that time management, innovating teaching strategies, adapting to the changes brought by the new normal trend in education, being flexible, providing alternative plans, being and patient and optimistic, and equipping oneself with the necessary skills are some of the ways on how teachers cope with these challenges that they encounter in modular distance learning modality.

In addition to the various coping mechanisms given, based on the study of Sagales, Gonzaga, Gonzaga, and Miranda (2020), they have also summarized common mechanisms which include knowing the sources of stress, reinventing and developing skills, keeping a healthy living, and staying connected with others which will help teachers handle stress. Hence, the stress was not caused only by the pandemic itself with its threats to lives and health of teachers, but rather by the sudden transition to distance learning and the associated uncertainties.

The findings showed that instructors were resilient in the face of the pandemic, with a high degree of optimism and a low level of occupational stress and emotional weariness caused by COVID-19. Additionally, this study has demonstrated that optimism is not related to emotional weariness or job stress, although it did identify a strong relationship between these latter two variables. In general, it can be

said that teachers are very upbeat despite the pandemic. This study supports past findings that less occupational stress results in fewer instances of emotional weariness (Lagat, 2021).

According to the research, the New Normal classroom needs a curriculum and instruction, teacher, leadership, and involvement that are flexible and adaptable to the changing and complex educational environment brought on by the disease's persistence (Galang, 2021).

Here for the first time is an account of the inner lives of teachers during and immediately after the pandemic lockdown. Most of these are stories of hope, resilience, and enormous courage in the face of a deadly virus. Your faith in teachers and teaching will be restored after reading this book (Ivers, 2020). Anxiety and fear adversely affect the physiological systems that protect individuals from infection. This article comments on the role that religious faith and practice can play in helping individuals remain free from infection by the coronavirus and in helping to moderate the effects of infection if that should occur (Koenig, 2020).

Preschool directors and teachers were able to work together and uphold an exceptional code of practice in accordance with the government's SOPs. By adhering to the SOPs, parents were able to build solid relationships with the administrators and teachers and help the preschool administration make sure that the children are acting in accordance with the SOPs. Throughout the entire MCO time, all parties engaged worked together effectively, setting a positive example for the preschoolers (Senin et al., 2021).

Parents employed tactics and procedures to aid learners as they tutored and coached their children, including translating materials into the students' native tongues, planning and keeping track of activities, and setting goals. Parents also keep an eye on their children's compliance and development through communication with the school, organizing of learning kits, and examination of completed products. A parent's handbook was created based on the findings and provides tactics and advice for parents to increase their involvement in MDL of their kids. The study suggests disseminating the manual to boost and improve parents' participation in modular remote learning (Gumapac et al., 2021).

According to Ernita (2021), children receive support from their parents in the form of communications, messages, guidance, penalties, and prizes. Students studying at home are encouraged to do so to increase their interest in the subject. As a result, parents have fulfilled their responsibilities as educators, discipline enforcers, motivators, and controllers. The degree of knowledge, as well as the level of interaction between parents and children at home, determine the role of parents.

Additionally, teachers have the training and development of skills needed to perform their work successfully and efficiently. While parents and guardians can assist their children in the new learning method, some of them may find it difficult to facilitate and explain the modules that have been supplied for them. The analysis demonstrates that the primary schools have received adequate funding and resources and are making good use of them (Guiamalon, 2021).

Although the burden of teachers has dramatically increased in 2020, and many of them have successfully negotiated a continuity of learning in challenging conditions, we must keep in mind that instructors were already at danger of burnout before COVID-19 disturbed the classrooms. Recognizing and promoting teacher wellness should be a top goal as nations continue to navigate times of distant education in light of the new coronavirus's exacerbation of the stressors faced by instructors (Dabrowski, 2020).

One of the areas of human existence that has been most impacted by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) epidemic is education. In a recently disclosed communication, the authors reminded all nations that it is their duty to develop plans for securely reopening schools. In order to mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic as a public health catastrophe, this study reiterates the need of following school health standards while delivering face-to-face lessons in accordance with national and international recommendations (Sarmiento et al., 2021).

Research showed that these teachers are greatly challenged in terms of learning quality transfer, module distribution and retrieval, students' difficulties in following instruction, power disruption, internet connection, and health risks posed by the pandemic. Nevertheless, these teachers dealt with these difficulties by employing their own coping techniques. Teaching can be challenging and frustrating, especially in these difficult times, but as these teachers demonstrated, everything is possible. Hence, educators must be ready for any situation that may arise. This situation is unlikely to get better anytime soon; instead, teachers will need to adjust to and accept this reality (Agayon et al., 2022).

DepEd Mental Health Policies for Teachers

The Department of Education had launch the TAYO

Naman!: Tulong, Alaga, Yakap, at Oras para sa mga Tagapagtaguyod ng Edukasyon online series to provide proactive Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) to its personnel and stakeholders in accordance to DepEd Memorandum No. 058, s. 2020. The program aimed to develop a resilient workforce that can cope current and future crises and prepare personnel with ways to protect their mental health amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and promote the well-being of all DepEd personnel. It was spearheaded by the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Service (DRMSS), and in cooperation with the Bureau of Human Resource and Organizational Development – Employee Welfare Division (BHROD – EWD), TAYO Naman! is a continuation of DepEd's initiative of Wellness Check Series to provide discussions on positive coping mechanisms to combat stress and other challenges to a person's mental health brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic (Department of Education, 2021). The various series launched by the department for its personnel are relevant, timely and beneficial for them in this time of pandemic.

Methodology

This present study utilized qualitative phenomenological research design. Polit and Beck (2012) explained that phenomenology type of qualitative research is employed to investigate a person's lived experience and uncover meanings of this experience (as cited by Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). As cited by Ramjerdi, Khodami and Karimi (2020), in phenomenological studies the researcher tries to shape patterns and meaning relationship by establishing close relation with participants (Creswell, 1945). Moreover, a phenomenological research design is a study that attempts to understand people‟s perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular phenomenon (Pathak, 2017).

Participants

The participants of this study were t5 teachers of San Rafael Elementary School for with different criteria for the basis of selection and would able to provide information to the researcher about the mental stress they are going through in this time of pandemic and while coping with distance learning in the second quarter of this school year as the basis time period.

The inclusion criteria included the following:

1. teaching at San Rafael Elementary School;
2. teaching in in Kindergarten to Grade 6 levels; and
3. is actively involved in the delivery of learning through modular distance modality.

For the selection of subjects, the convenience or availability sampling method will be employed. Convenience sampling is a verified and reliable sampling method which selects individuals based on their availability and convenience for the researcher (Jarosz, 2021).

Instruments

In order to answer the objective of the study, an interview guide through the conduct of in depth-interview was employed to facilitate efficient and productive gathering of responses. In- depth interview was used in gaining access to individual's life worlds.

Interview guides consisted of either questions, topics or a combination that run from unstructured to highly structured (Smulowitz, 2017). In-depth interview guide questions were prepared by the researcher. The questions provided were consistently connected and related to stress and experiences in this time of pandemic and distance learning.

To establish the face or content validity of the interview guide, it was validated by the three experts in the field. The suggestions and comments of the three experts was integrated in the research instrument. Then, an audio/video recording device was used to gather or collect responses from the participants,may it be in oral and non-verbal cues and also if necessary, the researcher will take notes in case the participants refuse to record or video their responses. The data was transcribed for textual analysis, validity and reliability of the instrument used.

Procedure

To have a systematic flow in the gathering of data, the researcher will write a letter addressed to the Schools Division Superintendent to seek approval to allow the conduct of the study in San Rafael Elementary School, District of Hinobaan, Division of Negros Occidental. The researcher will also ask consent to the Public Schools District Supervisor, school principal as well as the permission from the participants involve in the study.

The researcher administered an in-depth interview consisting of a variety of questions answered by the participants while abiding the health and safety protocols. There were communications with them with regards to the main objectives of the study

undertaking, the general instructions, the length of time it would take, the relevance in extending their support and the assurance that all information acquired will be kept confidential.

Analysis

A phenomenological approach adapted from Creswell was used to analyze the data gathered from the participants about their experiences of mental stress and coping mechanisms in this time of pandemic. The following steps to elaborate phenomenological analysis are the following. First, the researcher will describe his or her own experience with the object of study in order to identify personal judgments and prejudices so that they don't affect the process of analysis. Second, the researcher will proceed with the "horizontalization" of data wherein the researcher will list each of the relevant quotes of the studied topic and gives them equal value with regard to the expressions of the group. Third, the researcher will group the relevant topics into units of meaning. Fourth, the researcher will write the textual description and includes "ad verbatim" quotations. Fifth, the researcher will write the structural description. Finally, according to the textual and structural analysis, the researcher will proceed to identify the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Pathak, 2017).

Member checking was employed to establish the trustworthiness of results. As cited by McGrath, Palmgren and Liljedah (2018), member checking is a method of returning an interview transcript or debriefing the analytical results with participants for agreement (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Creswell 2013). As such, this method may act as a sounding board and a way of checking that one has understood the reported responses of the respondents, especially when it comes to picking up subtleties such as irony, emotions, silences, or other gestures (Birt et al. 2016; McGrath et al. 2016).

Results and Discussion

After a thorough and rigorous data explication and analysis based on the interviews conducted, I examined the categories, themes, and findings from the product in the initial data and narrowed my analysis to arrive in one central or core group. After cutting out redundancy, I trimmed it down into four essential themes. The four themes that emerged are;

1. Challenges of the Teachers in the New Normal
2. Teachers' Response to the Challenges
3. The Positive Side of the New Normal in Education
4. Teachers' Realizations

These themes are developed from the various categories that were formed from the common units of relevant meanings.

According to (Saldaña, 2011) all the main categories, items or finding must be able to "pass the touch test." If a category is not conceptual in nature and can be affected, it is then reconceptualized to something that cannot (Saldaña, 2011). After showing a central or core group, I classified the groups to get to the essentials of the items to begin examining the link among them (Saldaña, 2011).

The five conversation partners in this study shared their lived experiences as public-school teachers at San Rafael Elementary School in the delivery of Modular Distance Learning in time of COVID-19 pandemic.

The following are their statements when asked the overarching question:

"What are your live experiences as public-school teachers at San Rafael Elementary School in the delivery of Modular Distance Learning in time of COVID-19 pandemic?"

Challenges of the Teachers in the New Normal

Modular learning is the most popular type of Distance Learning. In the Philippines, this learning modality is currently used by all public schools because according to a survey conducted by the Department of Education (DepEd), learning through printed and digital modules emerged as the most preferred distance learning method of parents with children who are enrolled this academic year.

In the current set-up, the teachers take the responsibility of monitoring the progress of the learners through different assessments. The learners may ask assistance from the teacher via e- mail, telephone, text message or instant messaging among others. Where possible, the teacher shall do home visits to learners needing remediation or assistance. Printed Modules were delivered to students, parents, or guardians by the teachers or through the Local Government Officials.

The succeeding discussions will tackle about the subthemes identified under this major theme which are all based on the interview conducted and responses of the interviewee.

This theme was based on the foundation of Holmberg's Theory which is mostly used as anchorage for studies relating to the effects of distance learning. Some basic characteristics of Distance Education such as empathy, learner autonomy, and interpersonal communication are used to analyze organizational aspects of remote learning. Hence, this theory compares old system of education to the new normal to improve the efficiency of organizing modular classes through some recommendations such as continuously applying the matching model, effectively exploiting the platform and tool features, streamlining the content, and innovating the assessment method (Nguyen Thanh et al., 2021).

Under a Familiar Roof: Sentiments about being Isolated at Home.

During the interview Conversation Partner 3 mentioned that:

When COVID-19 hits, it was difficult for me, because I was used to get along with lots of teacher. During COVID-19, I'm alone working in my room. The loneliness feels different from what I used to.

She also added:

In my social life, I felt lonely in a way that I can't go out to mingle with my neighborhood and extended family members.

Furthermore, she concluded her statement with:

During COVID 19, I feel being stress because I can't go out. Even I really missed my family, I can't go out to see them because of the protocols that we need to follow. We also experienced being quarantined where we stayed in a specific area, and we can't go out. We live near the highway and sometimes, when people that we know is passing by, we talked to them while maintaining our distance.

To support this findings, a high level of social support protects adults' psychological outcomes from the detrimental effects of self-isolation, according to the literature. The results showed that higher reported teacher support at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic protected against the bad effects of self-isolation, while lower perceived teacher support enhanced these associations. The findings could guide the creation of policies for tactics to enhance adolescent health outcomes during the COVID-19 crisis and other pandemics (Wright & Wachs, 2021).

This present finding implies that as teachers implement modular distance learning during the lockdown, and since schools are about to resume, they are quite concerned about the brand- new, unprecedented teaching environment. The revealed that teachers displayed signs of stress, sadness, and anxiety. Additionally, this symptomatology is influenced by factors including parental status, gender, age, employment stability, level of education at which they teach, and others. We make the case that protecting teachers' mental health is essential for enhancing both the effectiveness of instruction and students' mental well-being.

What Matters Most is not to be the Virus Host:

Health Related Concerns for Oneself and Significant Others

In one of the questions during the interview, Conversation Partner 2 uttered:

Also, I am worried about the health status of my family, especially to my mom who is in old age.

Conversation Partner 4 also made mentioned that:

During COVID-19, I experienced being worried and paranoid; because I thought that I might catch the virus.

She also added that:

In my personal life, I feel that every move that I make is limited. I can't really spend a reasonable time with my colleagues. For example, I have allergy and every time I sneeze, they distance themselves from me thinking that they might catch the virus.

As an additional input to this subtheme, it was heard from Conversation Partner 1 that:

Everything changed. Everything is limited because we have rules and protocols to follow. One more thing, we use face shield and face mask that makes me feel I'm running out of air. It is difficult.

Along with this subtheme, Conversation Partner 2 declared her frustrations as to what she had experienced:

To be honest, I got scolded by my mom, because I stay up late at night just because of it, and my parents are worried about my health. I just have that mindset that

if I don't work for it, I don't have anything to give to my students. And I have that conscience as a teacher to have my students learn something.

Moreover, Conversation Partner 5 declared that:

COVID 19 pandemic affect my life because it is difficult for me, especially on my travel from home to school. In my social life, it is also affected because I can't really interact because of the protocols that we should follow. That is why interaction with others became limited.

In support this findings Lizana et al. (2021) mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted how teachers perceive their present quality of life. These results might be explained by job stress brought on by teleworking or by feelings of dread, loneliness, and worry that the pandemic and the confinements it causes will get worse. In addition, many teachers have found it difficult to teach and care for students during the COVID-19 pandemic, and its effects on their physical health, mental health, and well-being should be of considerable concern on a national and international level. By cooperating more and ensuring better access to social support networks, policymakers and practitioners can assist teachers with their health. The support for teachers and, by extension, the educational system during and after the epidemic was greatly aided by these conversations and provisions (Kim et al., 2022).

In the study of Wakui et al. (2021), he reported that it is important to identify the causes of educational worry and infection-related concern that teachers encounter in face-to-face sessions during a pandemic. There is a need to continue to fight COVID-19 infections for at least a few years even if the availability of a COVID-19 vaccination becomes widespread worldwide. Understanding the causes of teachers' worry and coming up with solutions to reduce it are crucial for ensuring children' access to an education given worries about such infections.

The result simply means that face-to-face interaction during the COVID-19 outbreak has made teachers anxious about contamination and instruction. Although vaccination programs are beginning in the country, it is doubtful that the virus was totally eradicated. The result of this research may be utilized to provide information on the causes of teachers' educational and infection-related worry when classes resume in the presence of coronavirus infections. The results show that informing teachers of national and local government regulations may not be enough. To prevent teachers from becoming infected and experiencing anxiety about their family, pupils and co-workers, and their own health, local public health professionals, the department of education and local government unit must give them information, attitudes, and practice regarding infectious diseases.

This Change feels Strange: Difficulty brought by the New Learning Modality

During the interview, Conversation Partner 1 opened-up about his personal disappointments about his experience. He said:

It is difficult! It took time for us to adjust since we were used to be in a face- to- face classroom setting.

Conversation Partner 4 even point outed about:

In terms of schoolwork, I get a little bit tired because of the shift from Face- to-Face to printed modular learning modality. So, I am tired of printing.

Conversation Partner 5 also share the same sentiments according to her statement:

So, in my experience. Since this is the first time to encounter this pandemic. So that's why it's not easy to us teachers to teach especially to our scheduling, to adapt to our new normal classes and of course, we teachers struggle as well because of the effects of covid 19 pandemic.

After being asked by a follow-up question, Conversation Partner 4 mentioned that:

Disadvantage in a way that I can't apply my teaching skills on how to handle my students because I just sending them their printed modules. We can't really deliver the lesson that we wanted.

In the perspective of Conversation Partner 3, it can be inferred that these changes in the education set-up also have affected her, she said:

It really changed, because before pandemic, we can teach the students face to face. While during the pandemic, we cannot teach them directly. When students don't know what to do, you really need text or call them.

Conversation Partner 3 also uttered:

It is hard to impart knowledge if it's not face-to-face

class. So, there is a level of difficulty in assessing every student, and it is a big challenge.

According to Mbanlwa, (2021) to continue teaching and learning while preventing the spread of the virus, the methods of instruction had to be modified. Institutions of higher learning had to adapt their assessment practices to match their teaching strategies. The Covid-19 pandemic was the reason for the lockdown initiatives, which had an impact on educational standards and evaluation procedures. Most academic institutions now provide distance learning instead of face- to-face instruction due to the pandemic. Students frequently feel less excited about the integrity of their studies because of the teacher's lack of interaction with them (Mbandlwa, 2021).

Additionally, distance learning modalities such as online and modular learning represented a complete paradigm shift from traditional methodologies. It was quite difficult for teachers and students to adjust to this new way of teaching and learning. With the sole purpose of providing their pupils with a superior education, many educational institutions utilized various technology and methodologies (Mensah, 2021).

This subtheme depicts that comparing the effectiveness of modular instruction to traditional teaching methods, it is clear that it is not effective even it allows pupils to learn at their own pace. The students are not stimulated, and they lack interest because of the unrestrained self-learning method that needs a quick reinforcement and comments that are added to practice exercises. As a result, this type of learning modality weakens the student-centered learning strategy. Moreover, the introduction of modular instruction brought about several difficulties for parents, students, and teachers. The primary issues that surfaced were a lack of resources for the creation and delivery of modules, students' difficulties with independent study, and parents' ignorance of how to academically support their child(ren). Therefore, using modular distant learning involves challenges.

Mind Over Matter: Mental Health of Teachers

The fourth subtheme was taken from the experiences shared by Conversation Partners 2, 3 and 4. According to Conversation Partner 2:

I feel worried and stressed. In my social life, I stayed at home together with my family and communicating with my colleagues to see if everything is fine through chat.

Conversation Partner 3 also thought about the same sentiment, according to her:

It affects my life because I feel emotionally down which reflects to my behavior, like there were times when I feel tired of working.

An additional response form Conversation Partner 2 was:

In the first week of the pandemic, we were worried sick and stressed, especially its effect to our bodies. Most of all, honestly speaking if this will continue, we might lose our work and salary. And how can we work without worrying and fear.

Lasty, Conversation Partner 4 declared that:

My mental health is fine but, seriously, I feel being paranoid when pandemic started, especially we have someone around us being positive with the virus. I fear going to school, where I might catch the virus and undergo contact tracing. Also, I overthink of things like me being contact traced and the rest of my colleagues, and I might take the blame for it.

Silva et al. (2021) highlighted the multiple difficulties and the extent to which the pandemic has affected working circumstances, way of life, and particularly the mental health of teachers. He also concluded that teachers had at least one mental health problem during the pandemic, such as increased alcohol consumption, sleep problems, use of psychotropic medication, decreased quality of life, and fear of COVID-19.

Teachers have been forced to adapt to new tasks and responsibilities as well as demanding working conditions. It was combed through news articles and the existing research literature on teacher mental health. According to the information that is currently available, it is likely that throughout the pandemic, teacher mental health significantly declined. We identify teachers as the

Covid-19's unappreciated frontline and offer suggestions to encourage further advancements (Beames et al., 2021).

This subtheme highlighted the significance of protecting teachers' mental health in order to maintain both pupils' wellbeing and high-quality instruction. So that they can better handle the crisis and, as a result, perform better in their teaching roles, those instructors who are most susceptible to the effects of the

pandemic should be given attention. We must remember that the education that young people acquire during this current crisis will influence society in the future. Therefore, we must safeguard the mental health of those who deliver this education if we want it to be of a high caliber.

Double Trouble: Difficulty in balancing workload, pregnancy, and parenthood.

In one of the questions raised during the interview, Conversation Partner 5 spoke about her personal experience as a teacher and as a mother, she believed that:

Also, as a mother and a pregnant woman, it is not easy and advisable for me to stay up late to print modules, but still we are obliged to the task to cater the needs of our children.

Conversation Partner 4 also revealed that:

I am mentally drained because I am teaching my own child. Doing modules is different from what I used to, to teach other children and not tutoring my own child. I am easily got irritated when he can't understand the lesson.

To support this finding, it is said that higher levels of maternal and child mental health issues were also linked to maternal and child challenges with children's education at home. Our research indicates that many children and mothers found it challenging to utilize the online educational opportunities set up in response to the epidemic at home. Given the strong links between these difficulties and both children's and mothers' mental health, we urge teachers to be flexible, empathic, and supportive of students who are learning at home (Burns et al., 2022).

This subtheme explains that Families who have children struggle to provide for them, which COVID-19 has brought to light and highlighted. In a world before COVID-19, families lack training and frequently have insufficient time and money. These pre-existing issues have been made worse by COVID-19, which has increased the obligations already placed on families. Parents including those whose job is teaching frequently lack the physical tools required to support children in remote learning, as well as the training necessary to support children at home. To meet their requirements and to be helpful in the event of future school closures or remote teaching, central government must invest in technology to serve children and their families.

Hello from the Other Side: Communication Barriers with Significant Others

In this subtheme, the communication barriers which was a common issue not only in education but even in families was discussed. Conversation Partner 5 elaborated this through her experience. She said:

The impact of the pandemic in my personal life, of course, it shortened the time that I usually spend to socialize with others.

Conversation Partners 4 also explained that:

On the other hand, in my social life, it really changes, because we can't do the things that we used to, to talk to our friends and colleagues, just messenger chat or text message.

In terms of communicating with the students, Conversation Partner 2 mentioned that:

Mostly, when it comes to challenges, following up the students and seeing them, especially addressing their needs. To parents who don't get the modules of their children, we need to encourage them to focus on their children.

These statements show how communication plays a big role in teachers' way of life especially in communication with colleagues and most importantly with providing feedback to the learners. However, because of certain factors such as internet connectivity, health risks, and lack of gadgets, it becomes difficult for teachers (Castroverde & Acala, 2021).

It implies that the majority of teachers now engage with others less in person and wear masks when we are face to face, which is one of the most noticeable shifts. There are some interesting and crucial observations on the impact of social isolation on communication. Teachers at present the present condition communicate with other people less frequently overall and spend more time on Zoom, Skype, and other mediated platforms. One effect is that teachers become more wary of other people when they have less contact with them. In terms of their learners, lack of feedback, communication, and face-to-face interactions with pupils make it challenging to assess their learning in the new normal. Additionally, communication and technology hurdles make it difficult to implement an efficient distant education program. Feelings of alienation and isolation during distance education are a fundamental and important obstacle that affect this

education's continued success. Because an individualistic viewpoint makes one feel disconnected from the community. These factors make up the core of the human barriers to distant learning.

Watch me Burn: Exposure to Physical Exhaustion

Because of the effect COVID-19 has had on the educational community, Conversation Partner 1 shared his honest view about how the pandemic affected him, he answered in one of the questions during the interview that:

Honestly, it doubled my work. My time to rest is limited since I have a number of modules to accomplish every week in order to distribute it to my pupils on a scheduled date.

An adage to this subtheme was taken from the statement of Conversation Partner 2:

In my work life, there is a point where I say that it's easy since I don't have students to deal with and the work is handy, only giving modules. But, the difficulty was tripled. We don't just do printings at school, but in our home also.

Conversation Partner 1 also included in his statement that:

Sometimes it's worst if our work were doubled or there's another work to do, especially if there's a report that needs to be submitted ASAP. But I feel satisfied when it's done and with the results, because the one that will benefit are my pupils. Well, sometimes, printing of modules takes a lot of time, especially the time for your family and for yourself.

Also, according to Conversation Partner 2:

When I get to school, I do printings, module segregation, giving and receiving modules to and from the parents, and asking them about their children. Then I check their activities and motivate the parents to have their kids answer their modules.

Which is also like the experience of Conversation Partner 4, her uttered words were:

When I get to school, I retrieve modules from the last week and distribution on that schedule. Answer parents/students' queries and prepare materials/modules for the next distribution schedule. Then, for me to know the statuses of my students, I check their papers. After that, if there's someone who didn't pass a certain competency, I will conduct a home visitation for me to assist their learnings.

Conversation Partner 5 also shared her practice. In an elaborate explanation, she said that:

First is travel form home to school. Then, when I get to school, that is the time for me to prepare the modules for distribution and retrieve the modules from parents/guardians upon returning it. Orienting the parents about their usual obligation in getting or returning of modules following the imposed schedule for proper monitoring. Then, I'm cleaning my classroom and do other school-related work. With regards to my pupils, through their parents/guardians, I can monitor them. Through them, I can ask about the status of the children, if they are doing their modules on their houses, and as a teacher, I can share ideas to them.

During the pandemic, anxiety, depression, and stress were all very common among teachers, but there was a lot of difference between research. In the Spanish study, anxiety and stress were more prominent. The findings highlight the need for strategies to support instructors' mental health, particularly when they resume teaching in-person classrooms (Silva et al., 2021).

In the study of Mehtab et al. (2016), his conclusion was that teachers in government departments where the module system has been introduced desire that their institutions go back to the "annual system" of instruction. They thought the modular system was more demanding and places a greater emphasis on theoretical learning than on practical learning.

This subtheme implicates that because of the suspension of face-to-face classes, it is fair to say that a major number of elementary teachers experienced occupational stress. Pandemic worries and work overload were the stresses that had the greatest influence at this time, and these factors along with other perceived threats which explained the emergence of various psychophysical stress and burnout among them. Based on these findings, it would be preferable for institutional education authorities to review the administrative protocols that were used during the duration of the use of modular distance learning and adjust the communication, planning, assessment, and supervision processes that have been implemented in ways that are beyond the actual capabilities of many teachers.

What's Your Status? Unreadiness and Incompetence to Teach of Home Learning Partners.

Using the words given by Conversation Partner 5 as the primary source, this subtheme was identified. She made mentioned that:

This new normal scenario, we are here not only to teach the pupils, but also the parents. To extend our expertise to parents so that they can also teach their kids at home. Mostly in flung areas, parents are not that knowledgeable and not all of them finish their elementary. The work became a burden in this scenario compared to face-to-face classes. We really extend our work to parents because it was doubled compared before.

The same experience, provoked Conversation Partner 2 to think that:

I feel stress and being tired. I feel worried when I don't finish the modules. Because of it, I feel mentally stress in a way that I always think that the parents might say, "the teachers are not doing anything, they just gave us few modules.

Contrary to the responses given by the conversation partners, Trovela, (2021) concluded tin his research that parents take it in a positive side when teachers communicate to them to update their children to ensure their sons or daughters pose Growth and development in the implementation of the Modular Distance learning. This is supported by their responses that the learners are the one who answers their modules using only their own ideas and understanding. It also imposes self-control in answering the modules honestly. This falls on the category of Monitoring of Learning task where the parents serve as facilitator.

Circulars and notes in diaries are among the traditional methods of communication with parents, however in this era of pandemic messaging services, facebook messenger or email communication channels with parents have been proven to be quite effective in communicating. Home learning has become a viable alternative to traditional schooling techniques, which should be optimized to effectively teach kids the fundamentals of learning at home with the limited resources at hand. You can use online resources at home if they have been modified to meet the requirements of our curriculum. The curricula should contain carefully selected most essential learning competencies that go beyond academic objectives and cover physical and emotional aspects. The constraints still exist, such as how parents with diverse educational backgrounds will adhere to the instructions; as a result, using printed modules to offer instruction as part of modular learning to assist at-home learning can be a viable option.

Teachers' Response to the Challenges

None of the solutions standalone perfectly. Each option ought to be a component of a comprehensive instructional strategy that makes use of various methodologies. Additionally, the students must concur with the solutions that the lecturers present. In fact, students must take part in these procedures to guarantee that the defined evaluation model considers their skill development and different learning rhythms. Because not every student has access to the same technological resources, it is crucial that the technological solution considered the variety of the equipment used by students. Additionally, it is crucial that the assessment be conducted in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation standards and without violating the students' privacy (Almeida & Monteiro, 2021).

The role of teachers includes the evaluation of learners' performance during the academic year, among other responsibilities. The use of online learning created a need for new ways of assessment to emerge. According to the present systematic review, teachers observed a deterioration in students' performance, mostly in mathematics and reading (Herbert et al., 2021). Communication problems, limited attendance to classes, and failure in monitoring students were some of the problems teachers had to face (Moghli et al., 2020). Concerns about the consequences of limited communication between teachers and students were raised, especially for younger students who need more support.

Self-Determination Theory was used as basis for this theme. Self-Determination Theory indicated that certain teaching strategies provided students with the opportunity to undermine other students' relatedness. Low relatedness and competence satisfaction were associated with negative affect and reduced participation, meaning teacher behaviors that undermined competence were counterproductive. Need satisfaction, however, was associated with positive affect and increased participation. Therefore, teaching in line with self-determination theory may improve student outcomes.

Looking at the Silver Lining: Optimism among Teachers

It is compelling that despite the present situation instances that support teachers' psychological resources are generated that helps them to pursue in their mission which is to teach. During the conversation with Conversation Partner 3, she revealed:

One thing that helped me the most is being positive to what I'm facing, because it is normal, and it is part of our daily life. Despite of that, we should always have positive outlook and still hope we will still receive blessings.

The dialogue with Conversation Partner 5 also projected how went through challenges and gained positivity. She answered:

"So for me, I feel stronger and of course more dedicated in my work just because we can't say no in terms of catering our learners and in terms of entertaining the parents even though some are not willing to do their responsibility fully so we are here to motivate them , always have the patience to entertain them and to make them realize that education is the most important thing for their children."

Momentarily, Conversation Partner 2 elaborated that:

I hope and pray that things will go back to normal. Often parents ask me some questions that are outside the working days or hours, but I tried my best to entertain them because I understand that they also have their priorities. Also, most of the parents' available time to communicate with is evening, and I grab that opportunity to talk with them about the needs of their kids at school. I always ask them of how they were when they pass the modules, if their kids know how to read and they murmur between their work and their kids. There's a time that it really affects us and the students.

Which Conversation Partner 4 briefly said: *Of course, we need to think positive. Just like me, I always think that I can do my work and finish it on time. I also face COVID 19 cases positively, that it will stop spreading.*

This subtheme was highly supported with the findings of the study conducted by Lagat, (2021) that showed that teachers were resilient in the face of the pandemic, with a high degree of optimism and a low level of occupational stress and emotional weariness caused by COVID-19. Additionally, his study has demonstrated that optimism is not related to emotional weariness or job stress, although it did identify a strong relationship between these latter two variables. In general, it can be said that teachers are very upbeat despite the pandemic. This study supports past findings that less occupational stress results in fewer instances of emotional weariness (Lagat, 2021).

Almost every element of life as we know it has been impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic. We lost our ability to fund common practices like visiting relatives and friends, traveling to work, and attending school in person. People all throughout the world started to experience a wide range of emotions, from frustration to anxiety, doubt, and even dread. In the education sector, this became increasingly clear as teachers, pupils, and their families ventured into uncharted waters. Over the past year, challenges in the sector of education have been prevalent. The pandemic merely made already existing problems with proficiency, wellbeing, and equity worse. But among these unsettling and unexpected times, a fresh attitude especially optimism was observed among teachers in the field which secures the continuity of education despite the pandemic.

Pushing the Limits: Flexibility and Adaptability of Teachers

Conversation Partner 5 during the dialogue mentioned about the flexibility and adaptability of the teachers which also contributed to the identification of this subtheme. She said:

As a teacher, we need to be flexible, and we need to cater all the needs of the learners for them to become better citizens and, they will not be left behind.

She also added:

In our daily routine there's a continuous adjustment, so that's why it, slowly, became easier. We also embrace the changes; we love our work. My work became easier because I love it.

Conversation Partner 4 also explained that:

First, I feel that it is getting worse. But right now, as the time goes by, it was lessened. We learned how to adjust, especially to the learning modalities, and on how to deliver it to the students where they can learn.

Pertaining to this subtheme, Galang (2021) mentioned

in his study that the New Normal classroom needs a curriculum and instruction, teacher, leadership, and involvement that are flexible and adaptable to the changing and complex educational environment brought on by the disease's persistence which supports the present findings.

Given the continually shifting needs of teaching, flexibility and adaptability has been emphasized as being crucial for teachers. Flexibility and adaptability may also aid teachers in avoiding emotions of disengagement and, consequently, avoiding a reduced level of professional commitment especially in this time of pandemic. Therefore, while making efforts to enhance teachers' well-being and encourage teacher retention, flexibility may be a consideration to consider. Teachers' feelings of empowerment must be given focus.

The Test of Faith: Teachers' Faithfulness to God

Sometimes, when things are going well, we lose sight of the misery that exists in life. But because of faith, we have the chance to comprehend that suffering has a reason and a purpose. This is the main idea revolving around this subtheme, where Conversation Partner 2 mentioned that:

On the other hand, it teaches me how to strengthen my faith and pray to God. Thinking positively and having faith in God, that it will give us peace of mind and salvation, especially in our minds.

Because of the negative effect of the pandemic, Conversation Partner 3 with has a steadfast faith as she said:

It is worsened, because it has been a long time since the pandemic hits and most of us were affected by it, especially the mode of teaching, which is a big challenge for me. While prayer and positive thinking helps us to lessen our worries during this pandemic.

According to Conversation Partner 5, the following are deemed essential during the pandemic:

First thing is prayer. Seeking for Gods' help is the best way to overcome challenges. Because without God, we all know what will happen, and once we put God as a center of our life, everything will follow. Even though we are experiencing hardships, there is a God who help us in our lives.

Conversation Partner 4 mentioned in one of the questions during the interview that:

I realized that this pandemic is a challenge for me as a teacher and citizen. It really is a test for us on how we can overcome or deliver the lesson to the students' despite of not having a face-to-face class. God makes us realize that no matter how rough the road is, we need to stand still for us to reach our goal, which is to teach the students and for them to learn.

To support this subtheme, Ivers (2020) included in his conclusions that most of the teachers have mentioned during his interview that most of their stories are stories of hope, faith, resilience, and enormous courage in the face of a deadly virus. In addition, according to Koenig, (2020) fear and anxiety have a negative impact on the physiological defenses against infection. He also discussed how faith, religious belief and practice can both prevent coronavirus infections in people and help to lessen the effects of an infection, should one arise.

The findings perpetuated that optimism only partially mediates the relationship between religion and well-being. These important findings imply that when faced with challenges in life, elementary teachers may use their religiosity and related aspects as healthy coping mechanisms to handle the academic difficulties brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing so, they may experience contentment that is mediated by the advantages of optimism and well-being.

Helping Hands: Support from Significant Others

According to Conversation Partner 5:

In my experience, and with the help of my friends at work, we find solutions to such problems and scenarios. Because of their ideas and with the support of people around us.

Another, Conversation Partner 2 also shared that:

I think that I can manage my mental health and well-being which is good for myself. To have positive vibes, help and support coming from my family and friends. Also, faith and trust in God and prayer for the pandemic to stop.

Conversation Partner 3 looked back on her experiences as she answered:

There is a big support coming from my family and church members, because they gave us our needs

during the pandemic, especially food.

Moreover, Conversation Partner 4 cannot contain her emotions as she said: *Even though our family is unstable financially, still they support and love me. Whatever is needed, together, we are helping each other. On the other hand, my friends gives us support through advice, especially on my work.*

According to Senin et al. (2021), school head and teachers were able to work together and uphold an exceptional code of practice showing collaboration among them. Also, parents were able to build solid relationships with the administrators and teachers and help the administration make sure that the children are acting in accordance with the new learning modality. Throughout this period, all parties engaged worked together effectively, setting a positive example for the learners.

These subtheme gives a clear idea that if anything, this pandemic has made sure how certain students are favored while others are left behind. It has also demonstrated the value of educators and how, with the correct tools and resources, they can thrive in any situation, including a crisis. While many school systems and teachers are attempting to engage students, they are faced with challenges such as stress brought on by the economy, worry for the safety of loved ones, and anxiety about the future; the difficult task of returning to schools where many students have dropped out or fallen behind; increased pressure on teachers to ensure catch-up with little support for professional development; and limited access to the appropriate technologies.

This finding means that if teachers feel capable of conducting remote education, they will be more successful, and colleagues, school administrators and family can increase their self- confidence if they were given enough support. Teachers create a practical and learner-centered vision for distance learning if they collaborate. Schools should help in building teachers' sense of effectiveness through indirect encounters one strategy.

Count Me In: Teachers as Part of the Solution

For this subtheme, Conversation Partner 5 made mentioned about: *In my mental aspect, it sharpened my memory on how to solve this pandemic, especially here at school. We are looking for ideas and ways on how to continue the learnings of the children even we don't have face-to-face classes, and because we don't practice this situation like countries where they have this kind of modalities. Even though this is new for us, we are mentally able, that our minds were sharpened on how to solve this problem.*

For Conversation Partner 2, her answer was: *Managing of time and being alert of finishing modules for our students, that it will not cause them delay. I need to work hard and spend time to prepare the modules. I have that thing in mind, that I need to finish the modules for me to deliver the lessons to the students.*

Distance learning was used as an emergency measure during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bond, 2020). Thus, there were cases where both students and teachers faced difficulties in accessing electronical devices and/or an internet connection, while there were also students who did not have a quiet place to study, especially in disadvantaged families. Many teachers, on the other hand, did not have the technical and pedagogical skills needed to integrate digital devices in instruction, and consecutively in distance education. Even skilled teachers experienced difficulties in adapting to distance learning demands, not only in terms of teaching but also in offering psychological and communication proximity to their students, as pedagogy requires (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2021).

Despite the pandemic's overwhelming impacts, this world crisis has also been an incredible opportunity for learning. We are discovering just how flexible and resilient educational systems, decision-makers, educators, students, and families can be. The relationship between teachers and students is changing quickly, making it more challenging in many ways than it was when learning solely happened in person.

The Need to Cope: Coping Mechanisms of Teachers

Throughout the interview Conversation Partner 2 mentioned in one of her responses that as teachers, there is a need for time management. Her detailed response was:

Time management is a must. There will be a time where you can rest and a time to work, that is the lesson that I've learned. During the LAC session, that is the time where I realized the importance of time management. It is a big help and the work will be done easily.

Based on her own experience, Conversation Partner 3 explained that: *On my part, I'm always putting myself*

away from stress. Because we have lots of ways how to prevent stress, example is doing household chores and many things.

Furthermore, Conversation Partner 5 expounded this with her thought about: *As of now, I love my work and if you love working, you will be able to motivate yourself. You are putting away yourself from stress and you enjoy the things that you do in your daily life. That is why I can manage my mental health. Even though we are trying our best to become stress-free, but we are humans, we will experience it. Just try not to be stress and go with the flow of life.*

Little is known about factors that contributed to difficulties of teachers to ensure continuation of instruction when most teaching was conducted from home. For example, schools and teachers became increasingly dependent on digital tools for both teaching and communication processes. Whereas for some teachers, using the internet, communicating via social-media channels, or using video-conference tools did not pose a real problem, other teachers might experience remote teaching as a burden (Quezada, Talbot & Quezada-Parker, 2020). According to research, these teachers face significant issues with learning quality transfer, module distribution and retrieval, students' difficulties paying attention during class, power outages, internet connectivity, and health hazards associated with the epidemic. However, these educators overcame these challenges by using their own coping mechanisms. Teaching can be difficult and frustrating, especially in these trying times, but everything is possible, as these instructors proved. Therefore, instructors need to be prepared for every circumstance that might occur. It is unlikely that this scenario will improve any time soon, therefore educators will need to recognize this fact and adjust (Agayon et al., 2022).

With this theme, it can be perpetuated that the levels of discomfort and felt stress were higher in teachers who had no prior training and experience for the varying distance learning modalities in this time of pandemic. The most common coping mechanisms of teachers based on the interview were talking to friends and family and doing things for fun. This finding offers helpful data that may be used to create activities that support teacher wellbeing. The department should think about paying attention to socioeconomic and structural disparities, work-family conflicts, and other factors that may have an impact on teachers' mental health and performance.

The Positive Side of the New Normal in Education

Every industry in the globe has been negatively affected by COVID-19, and these days everyone is talking about them and concentrating on their losses during COVID-19. We must rise above this terrible circumstance and adopt a constructive outlook. This major theme of the present research will investigate some good pandemic effects on education, including effects on students and teachers. The COVID-19 has a variety of beneficial effects on education and other areas.

Furthermore, this major theme was anchored on the Explanatory Model of Optimism. An explanatory style describes how we make sense of adverse events that happen to us (Peterson & Seligman, 1987). Specifically, explanatory model of optimism refers to how we explain the causes of events. Our explanatory model of optimism tends to be stable. We tend to rely on the same type of explanatory style to explain the occurrence of uncontrollable events in our lives. Researchers have recently become interested in the literature on positive psychology (Rafiq et al., 2022).

Heads Up: The Support of the School

The first subtheme to emerge in this major theme was the support of the school head and the whole institution provided to the teachers. According to Conversation Partner 1: *When it comes to resources in module printing, we were provided by the school. Same as with physical and mental health, we have seminars, and we were provided with vitamins through school MOOE.*

Conversation Partner 2 also mentioned about his sentiments, she said: *I am thankful to our teachers who gave us support verbally, to see how we are doing. They also gave us what we need, especially supplies such as vitamins, disinfecting alcohol, and face masks. We must take care of ourselves. We need to work, but we must maintain a good health.*

For the thoughts of Conversation Partner 3, she said that: *When it comes to school, it's a little bit amusing, because my co- teachers knew that I am not good at computers. They are the one who print modules, and I am the one who do the borders and putting staples. I am very thankful to them, because no matter what grade level I go here at School and whatever things I need, they are there to help me. Speaking of what we need, just like supplies at school, I am very thankful*

for our principal, because he gives us what we need.

The key findings in the study of Moorhouse et al. (2021) show that clear role expectations, a collaborative support strategy, establishing solid connections, and durability are necessary for effective school-based professional support. This concept is adaptable and enables teachers and school heads to make changes as the circumstance does. Without the current approach, relationships built over a long period of support, adequate technology, and ongoing support, schools would not have been able to continue to give support throughout the school closures. The authors advise that SBPS be investigated by Education Bureaus to continue assisting teachers during school closures.

This subtheme projects that teachers are overcoming numerous obstacles to the best of their abilities, and administrators need to recognize this. School heads should be aware of how hard they are working and that they should understand how stressful it has been to deal with the increased accountability and rigor that comes with distant learning. Administrators should also make sure to emphasize to them that mastering all technological tools is not a must for success. Teachers seek assurances that the school and district will keep everyone safe and will provide the materials to produce the learning materials because they feel vulnerable. Principals need to keep in mind that providing information in digestible updates is crucial. Introduce an open-dialogue policy, especially for questions and concerns at the conclusion of each faculty meeting.

Bread and Butter: The Economic Advantages during New Normal

Another subtheme to materialized under this major theme focuses on the participants experiences that talks about the economic advantages brought by the new normal. During the dialogue, Conversation Partner 2 pointed out that:

She mentioned in a statement that teachers are grateful enough because we still have our salary. I'm worried because I thought we will lose our salary, and these words came in my mind; "what should I do? We might lose our salary because the news showed that the school will likely stop from operating.

Which is also prominent in the response given by Conversation Partner 3 which states that:

On my part, I feel blessed as a teacher, because if we look at other companies, they are mostly shutting down their businesses, it makes our life more difficult. But we as teachers, we always do our job despite of difficulties for us to earn our salary.

In opposition to the present findings, the teachers are in a difficult situation because, on the one hand, they are not paid and, on the other, they are required to offer online classes, which is an additional financial strain (Thakur, 2020). In other cases, the pandemic has left contract teachers from government schools and low-cost private schools without jobs, forcing them to choose menial occupations to survive (Apparasu, 2020; Janyala et al., 2020). Even elite and international school instructors were compelled to resign during the epidemic due to the financial difficulty their companies were experiencing (Gaikwad & Gehi, 2020).

This subtheme highlighted how auspicious being in the public sector during the pandemic crises. This is because of the efforts given by the national government and the departments and education sector groups jumped at the chance to push for the protection of teachers' salaries when school closures were announced as part of broader attempts to halt the spread of the COVID 19. These entities urged the protection of teacher pay across all classifications. At the time, it was unclear how much the earnings of teachers would be impacted.

Teachers' Realization

The public-school teachers acknowledged that they are unfamiliar with the state of the Philippine educational system now. In face-to-face classrooms, they are "pedagogical and subject knowledge specialists," but the Covid 19 epidemic in the Philippines forced all educational institutions to switch from face-to-face instruction to online, modular, and blended learning (Hew, Jia, Gonda, & Bai, 2020).

Toquero and Talidong (2020) stressed that teachers are not fully prepared to teach in the new normal. The rapid change from face-to-face teaching to new learning modalities is a huge challenge for policy makers, educators, and teachers. The new pedagogical trends caused anxiety and fear on how to teach students in the new normal (Yorgancioglu, 2020). The responses of the teacher participants imply that teachers must be upskilled and retooled with the new normal teaching pedagogies, be it online or remote teaching to better capacitate them.

In the study of Yorgancioglu (2020), he opined that the

present situation needs new ways, tools, methods, and experiences of teaching and learning. He, however, suggests that the new pedagogies shall be "technology-driven". Peters et al. (2020) call this "digital pedagogies". The present situation compels all educators and policymakers to explore new digital, online, and pedagogical possibilities to continuously deliver quality education among their learners (Peters et al., 2020). The new normal forced teachers to prepare and capacitate themselves to continuously deliver quality education (Motala & Menon, 2020).

For the major theme identified in this study, the Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory was used as anchorage. Kolb's experiential learning theory is one of the best-known educational theories in education. It defines experiential learning as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience (Healey & Jenkins, 2000). Concrete learning is when an individual gets a new experience or interprets an experience in a new way. Reflective observation comes next, where the person reflects on their experience personally. They use the lens of their experience and understanding to reflect on what this experience means. Abstract conceptualization happens as the person forms new ideas or adjusts their thinking based on the experience and their reflection about it. Active experimentation is where the learner applies the new ideas to the world around them, to see if there are any modifications to be made. This process can happen over a short period of time, or over a long span of time. Kolb went on to explain that a person will have their own preferences for how they enter the cycle of experiential learning, and that these preferences boil down to a learning cycle.

Mission Accomplished: Sense and Fulfillment among Teachers

The first subtheme under the realizations of teachers during the pandemic crises is about the how they have achieved fulfillment from their work. In her personal experience, Conversation Partner 3 shared that: *Despite of pandemic, still I impart my knowledge to my students. It is hard but fulfilling.)*

Conversation Partner 2 also express comparable sentiment about it. He mentioned that: *I am motivated and inspired in a sense that despite of lack of supplies, and because of the volume of modules that we were printing, still the school find ways to provide for our needs for us to continuously produce modules with the help of our school head. Our needs as teachers were catered and with that, we are relieved from stress. Also, because of the parents who tirelessly spending their precious time to get modules and giving support to their children that enables them to finish their school. They are the reason why I am inspired of my work.*

Moreover, Conversation Partner 5 fleetingly answered: *With this pandemic, I feel successful, because of the smile and joy that I show and bring to others. Also, seeing the parents' smile despite of the new normal set up in education. I can see their happy faces. I can't really tell what kind of help I extended to the parents, but as a teacher, I do feel that I fulfill my obligation for my students.*

When the COVID-19 pandemic was in effect, distance learning was employed as a last resort (Bond, 2020). As a result, there were instances where both students, parents and teachers had trouble getting access to computers and/or the internet, and some pupils, particularly those from low-income households, lacked a peaceful area to study. On the other hand, a lot of teachers lacked the pedagogical and technical abilities required to effectively incorporate digital devices into the classroom and subsequently in distant learning. Even experienced professors have trouble meeting the needs of remote learning, including providing their pupils with the psychological support and close communication that pedagogy required (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2021).

According to the average score that teachers received on the scales, Ulukan & Ulukan (2021) found that the psychological resilience, patience, and happiness levels of instructors are at medium levels. It was discovered that psychological resilience and patience levels are a major predictor of happiness during this pandemic, and that there is a somewhat favorable association between instructors' psychological resilience, patience, and happiness levels (Ulukan & Ulukan, 2021).

For its implication, despite the pandemic's overwhelming impacts, this world catastrophe has also been an incredible opportunity for learning. We are discovering just how flexible and resilient educational institutions, decision-makers, educators, students, and families can be. The relationship between instructors and students is changing quickly, making it more challenging in many ways than it was when learning solely happened in person.

Learners' and Parents' Dedication

Another reassuring subtheme emerged which concentrates on the efforts and hard work of the learners and their home learning partners that gave teachers motivation go continue with their job. Conversation Partner 1 explained:

In my everyday experience from the start of the pandemic, there are parents and pupils who were dedicated when it comes to education. I can say that they were hungry, and that they really in need of education.

This was also observed on the response of Conversation Partner 2, he said: *Number one is the students. As a teacher, I feel guilty of what I'm saying and that I can't really give them their needs in the most crucial times. And mostly the parents, because they are our partners during this time.*

For Conversation Partner 3, she declared that: *The thing that helped me to persevere on my profession is seeing the children longing for knowledge. That sometimes it's sad when you see them walking with you and ask if when is the time that they can enter their classrooms.*

Likewise, Conversation Partner 5 mentioned: *The one that motivates me are my pupils, because without them, I can't teach and if they're not interested on this learning modality, I will not have clienteles. So with that, as teachers, we are motivated to give our very best to become more efficient and effective for the students.*

To support this findings, it was said that parents employed tactics and procedures to aid learners as they tutored and coached their children, including translating materials into the students' native tongues, planning and keeping track of activities, and setting goals. Parents also keep an eye on their children's compliance and development through communication with the school, organizing of learning kits, and examination of completed products. A parent's handbook was created based on the findings and provides tactics and advice for parents to increase their involvement in MDL of their kids. The study suggests disseminating the manual to boost and improve parents' participation in modular remote learning (Gumapac et al., 2021).

According to Ernita (2021), children receive support from their parents in the form of communications, messages, guidance, penalties, and prizes. Students studying at home are encouraged to do so to increase their interest in the subject. As a result, parents have fulfilled their responsibilities as educators, discipline enforcers, motivators, and controllers. The degree of knowledge, as well as the level of interaction between parents and children at home, determine the role of parents.

The findings perpetuated the idea that schools must form partnerships with parents and establish shared accountability for kids' achievement in the educational system to adhere to the system of integrated support for their pupils. In this approach, parents' efforts to help schools are encouraged, parental involvement is raised, and they directly contribute to a successful educational system. The community, school, and home must all have mutual regard for one another. By including parents in the educational process, parental participation gives schools a crucial chance to enhance the present school curricula. It has been demonstrated that greater parental participation improves school atmosphere, parent and teacher satisfaction, and pupil achievement. Schools may have partnership programs in place that continuously create, implement, analyze, and improve strategies and procedures encouraging family and community engagement to guarantee successful parental involvement. Schools can promote participation in a variety of activities, such as parenting, home learning, communication, volunteering, decision-making, and community cooperation.

With High Hopes: Teachers' Expectations from the Department of Education

It transpired during the interview that teachers were looking forward about how the Department of Education could lessen the challenges that they have. For Conversation Partner 1, he said that: "*DepEd must focus on the Most Essential Learning Competencies focusing on the four macro-skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking)."*

While Conversation Partner 2 mentioned: *Lessen the paper works and focus on the needs of the students, especially to reading, because most of the students don't know how to read even though they were familiar with the letters of alphabet.*

In the perspective of Conversation Partner 3, it can be noted that her aspiration was: *Program that focuses only in literacy and numeracy for K-3, since there's a*

lot of student who are in the intermediate grades, but still they are non-readers and non-numerates.

Conversation Partner 4 on the other hand believes that: *The Dep-Ed must allow the face-to-face classes so that we can have a good learning ground for the students, but still, we need to follow the protocols. Then, we must conduct a seminar for teachers on how to manage our mental well-being.*

Which is also observable in the response of Conversation Partner 5: *Since we're at level 1, I do feel we can have our face-to-face classes for us to provide our service to our students. Also, lessen the competencies, especially to primary level, for them to focus on the essential competencies, and they can't really absorb all of it in just 1 day. Once a week, we must have a limited face-to-face orientation with the parents with regards to them teaching, monitoring, and feedbacking on their own homes. Give them extra knowledge and assistance coming from us teachers, for them to share with their children during MDL. Speaking of professional growth of the teachers, I hope we will have workshops/trainings/seminars for actual application of learnings in the teaching field.*

Although the burden of teachers has dramatically increased in 2020, and many of them have successfully negotiated a continuity of learning in challenging conditions, we must keep in mind that instructors were already at danger of burnout before COVID-19 disturbed the classrooms. Recognizing and promoting teacher wellness should be a top goal as nations continue to navigate times of distant education considering the new coronavirus's exacerbation of the stressors faced by instructors (Dabrowski, 2020).

According to Guimalon (2021), teachers have the training and development of skills needed to perform their work successfully and efficiently. While parents and guardians can assist their children in the new learning method, some of them may find it difficult to facilitate and explain the modules that have been supplied for them. The analysis demonstrates that the primary schools have received adequate funding and resources and are making good use of them.

One of the areas of human existence that has been most impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic is education. In a recently disclosed communication, the authors reminded all nations that it is their duty to develop plans for securely reopening schools. To mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic as a public health catastrophe, this study reiterates the need of following school health standards while delivering face-to-face lessons in accordance with national and international recommendations (Sarmiento et al., 2021).

This subtheme implies that for public education, COVID-19 has brought perilous times, with threats of fragmentation and unraveling as we risk losing instructors and students who might not return to classes once they resume. The fact that we are already hearing arguments in favor of turning the current emergency measures into long-term changes should worry us. But we also need to acknowledge that many communities and parents are beginning to value teachers' labor and professionalism. More and more people are becoming aware of the various functions that schools provide in assuring academic learning, as well as the health and nutrition of children and youth. This greater understanding and respect might be the cornerstone of a new public education rebirth.

Conclusion

Given the foregoing findings, the following conclusions were drawn: The New Normal in education posts a lot of uncertainties and grey clouds on the future of Philippine Education, however, teachers are born leaders and innovators, so they have always in them a solution to successfully hurdle the challenges confronting them. Teachers provide opportunities for learners to continue their education despite the health threats. They disregarded their vulnerability to the virus just to pay- off to what is required by the government and to uplift the teaching profession. It can be concluded therefore that teachers in general had made significant sacrifices in making sure that learning continues.

Furthermore, despite the unrecognized difficulties that they silently survived, teachers had a very strong sense of optimism and fighting spirit that naturally, things will go back to how it was in the old normal. They allowed themselves to be available for the support required by the parents as home- learning partners, it was even more a challenge to maintain their enthusiasm even in the most frustrating results of the activities they give to the children up to the imbalances, biases and unfairness in the way they are treated as professionals having to deal with extra-works other than facilitating learning. Though they don't run out of potentials in providing solutions to the mushrooming problems in the field of teaching, with the teachers' ability to influence, inspire and touch

others' lives, they have succeeded in winning support from those around them.

Not all the time, this pandemic caused a negative impact on the lives of the teachers. They were given many opportunities to think out of the box, especially in facing the challenges on keeping results as genuine as possible, in balancing their time for the family and in preparing the needs of the learners. The versality that the pandemic has caused the teacher has gone beyond the job descriptions of a teacher. Alongside the gradual development of their being a teacher, what made teachers stronger in the time of pandemic was the support of the school in overcoming all the challenges of the different modes of learning. They were forced to step into the virtual reality becoming available and visible in the different platforms just to continue improving their crafts.

Moreover, the roller- coaster ride of events in the life of a teacher in the light of the covid-19 pandemic, teachers were able to experience entrusting their profession to the will of the Lord. They indulge in every undertaking that was asked of them despite the imminent consequences. They had begun to gain so much positivity that all of us will wake up one day, strong and at will to continue teaching no matter how stubborn and persistent the next pandemic will be.

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