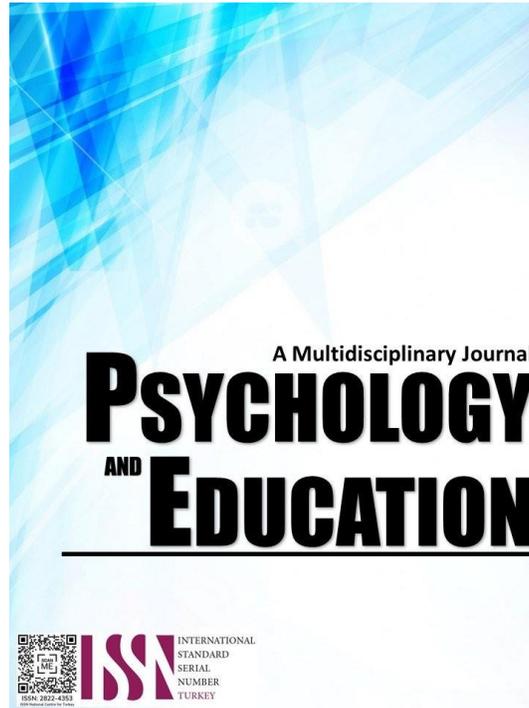


LESSONS FROM THE NARRATIVES OF PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS



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Lessons from the Narratives of Pedagogical Challenges of Public Elementary School Teachers

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Abstract

This study explores the lessons derived from the pedagogical challenges faced by public elementary school teachers at Pedro Acharon Sr. Central Elementary School (PASCES) in General Santos City during the pandemic. Utilizing a qualitative research methodology, the study employed purposive sampling to select six (6) teachers from various grade levels who engaged in online and blended learning modalities. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using a step-by-step thematic analysis process. The findings revealed key pedagogical challenges including difficulties in monitoring learners' progress, poor study habits, low attendance, and a lack of digital skills and resources. Lessons from these challenges highlighted the importance of upskilling and capacity building, fostering creativity in teaching methods, and being prepared for unforeseen emergencies. Furthermore, effective learning strategies emerged, emphasizing the need for continuous monitoring, collaborative support between teachers and parents, and engaging interactive activities. The study recommends that schools invest in teacher professional development, enhance technological resources, and develop robust preparedness plans to improve teaching and learning outcomes in future disruptions.

Keywords: *pedagogical challenges, blended learning, educational preparedness*

Introduction

In the wake of recent global health emergencies, I, along with my fellow public elementary school teachers in the Philippines, have faced unparalleled challenges. The sudden shift to remote learning required us to quickly adapt to new teaching platforms. We grappled with issues of technological access, learner engagement, and equitable distribution of educational resources, which have fundamentally altered the way I approach education (Nicholls, 2020). This transition has reshaped my teaching practices and the methods I use to support my students.

In my role as a teacher in a country with diverse socioeconomic and geographical conditions, I have struggled to ensure continuous learning for all my students amidst varying levels of internet access and digital device availability. The pandemic has underscored the critical role I play in addressing both the academic and socio-emotional needs of my learners, who have been affected by prolonged isolation and uncertainty (Talidong & Toquero, 2020). The shift from traditional classroom instruction to online learning introduced significant pedagogical changes that I had to cross.

Reflecting on my personal experiences during the pandemic, I have gained a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in adapting to new teaching methods while managing personal challenges. This period has highlighted the need for flexibility in my teaching approaches and the importance of offering choices and options to my learners. The pandemic prompted me to rethink my instructional methods, blending traditional practices with new strategies to better support my students. This experience has reinforced the need for institutions to support me and my colleagues in adapting to these changes and preparing for future challenges.

The Department of Education (DepEd) addressed these challenges by issuing Memorandum DM-CI-2020-00162, which outlined strategies for implementing various distance learning delivery methods (DLDM) for the 2020–2021 school year. These methods included modular, online, and media-based instruction, which significantly increased my workload and presented new obstacles. Many of us have voiced concerns about our preparedness to handle these innovative teaching methods and the impact of isolation on our effectiveness.

In this study, I aimed to capture and reflect on my own experiences, along with those of my fellow teachers, as we navigated the many challenges of teaching during the pandemic. The sudden shift to remote learning forced us to rethink our methods, adapt to new technologies, and find creative ways to keep students engaged despite the difficulties. Through this research, I aimed to shed light on our struggles, resilience, and the valuable lessons we gained from this experience. More importantly, I hoped to identify practical strategies that could improve teaching practices and strengthen support systems, ensuring that educators are better prepared for future disruptions. By understanding how we adapt, we can help shape policies and training programs that empower teachers to thrive in any educational setting.

Research Questions

In this study, I documented the teachers' experiences as they shared their narratives on the pedagogical challenges they have encountered and the lessons they have learned from those challenges during the pandemic. Specifically, I sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the pedagogical challenges experienced by public elementary school teachers amidst the pandemic?

2. What lessons may be culled from the pedagogical challenges to facilitate effective teaching?
3. What lessons may be culled from the pedagogical challenges to facilitate effective learning?

Literature Review

The World and the Educational Landscape During Pandemic

The world shares commonalities in the challenges faced by their respective educational system and their coping mechanisms to thwart the effects of the pandemic. At the time of writing, Australian learners have been studying remotely at home for around six weeks. Universities and K–12 schools in Flanders have been closed since March 16. In higher education, all classroom-based programs have been discontinued, and distance learning has taken their place. Educators provide synchronous (live classes) and asynchronous instruction at all educational levels. Given the minimal training that Australian teachers had before entering remote learning and teaching circumstances, early reports tend to reflect a dominant presentational or “information delivery” approach to online teaching. The infrastructure for online learning is quite sophisticated. Significant issues surround the equality of learners with limited technology access and those who study independently at home. Websites sponsored by the Australian government have resources and suggestions for enhancing the current remote learning environment (Duffy & Kent, 2020).

In Flemish higher education, blended learning has already gained significant traction and has become a widely adopted approach to teaching and learning. This method combines traditional in-person instruction with digital tools and resources, providing students with a flexible and personalized learning experience. Alongside this trend, the concept of pre-teaching has emerged as a popular strategy, particularly in K–12 education. Pre-teaching involves introducing learners to new material before it is formally covered in class, often through the use of videos, worksheets, or other preparatory materials shared by teachers (Patel, 2020).

A total of 43% of teachers communicate with their pupils weekly, and 29% do so daily. Eighty percent of kids received texts or emails from their schools, and 25% had access to virtual lessons. Teachers’ acquisition of new skills and a desire for enhanced collegiality and teamwork have been recognized as beneficial outcomes of the Department of Education and Skills’ guidance on continuing schooling. In line with the distribution of laptop computers for senior year learner exams, the government also promised assistance for ICT for schools. The funding was a component of a more extensive set of programs designed to assist everyone at risk because of COVID-19 school closures.

The digital economy in the Netherlands is highly developed, reflecting the country's strong technological infrastructure and innovative mindset. The widespread accessibility of the internet has become a cornerstone of modern life, influencing various sectors, including education. In our day and age, connectivity is no longer a luxury but a necessity, and Dutch society has embraced this reality. In the field of education, the integration of technology has become a fundamental part of teaching and learning processes. From interactive digital tools to online learning platforms, teachers and students alike are leveraging technology to enhance educational experience (Patel, 2020).

Concerns concerning pupils with difficult home situations and learners with unique educational needs are shared by teachers. The government has taken several actions to support girls who live in underprivileged circumstances. Teachers agree that support is needed for the planning and execution of successful online education. Schools in England, Wales, and Scotland have been ordered to close by the end of March 2020, apart from learners whose parents are vital employees like nurses and shop employees. Since fewer than 2% of school-age children are expected to be enrolled in formal education throughout this time, a sizable portion of youngsters will be ill-equipped or unprepared to attend online.

While most schools across the UK have broadband Internet access, this is not true for all households. Many schools have not invested in parents’ tools, training, and outreach to promote homeschool learning. If we consider the history of digital education, the 2020 pandemic will unavoidably become a turning moment. The viral outbreak shattered physical ties at all scales, including interpersonal, organizational, and international ones. The variability in how schools and teachers in all three countries have responded to this situation has stood out. It emphasizes how many institutions are still built and set up using conventional methods of face-to-face instruction (Patel, 2020).

Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) discussed the dual nature of online learning during the pandemic, emphasizing that while it presents significant challenges, it also offers opportunities for transformation. Their study highlights the need to critically explore these challenges and leverage them to enhance educational practices. Similarly, Bozkurt et al. (2020) examined various instructional approaches, including online, hybrid, and blended learning methods. They underscored the radical transformations in higher education driven by the necessity to digitalize education and training processes rapidly. This suggests a critical need for ongoing exploration of the challenges and opportunities presented by the shift to online learning, as these insights can inform the future direction of education.

Aristovnik et al. (2020) revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed emerging vulnerabilities in education systems worldwide, leading to a widespread shift toward online learning. Their study emphasized the importance of developing flexible and resilient education systems capable of withstanding future disruptions. This finding highlights the necessity of further research into building adaptable educational frameworks that can mitigate the impact of unforeseen challenges and ensure continuity in education.

The importance of digital competence among teachers was a focal point in studies by Ali (2020) and König et al. (2020). Both studies emphasized the significance of enhancing digital teacher competence and providing robust teacher education opportunities to support the transition to online teaching during school closures. These findings stressed the critical need for further research into teacher training and the development of digital competencies, which are essential for effective online teaching in the current and future educational landscape.

The pandemic has also impaired social inequalities, as noted by Ferri et al. (2020). The interruption of education due to COVID-19 has heightened issues of social injustice, inequity, and the digital divide, leading to increased trauma, psychological pressure, and anxiety among students, educators, and other stakeholders. These findings highlighted the urgent need for future research to address the social and psychological challenges associated with the pandemic. Ensuring equitable access to education and supporting the well-being of all parties involved is crucial to mitigating the long-term impacts of the pandemic on education.

Murphy (2020) provided a case study of the impact of the pandemic on online education at a university in Saudi Arabia, identifying specific challenges related to communication, student assessment, technology tools, and pandemic-related anxiety or stress. This study underscored the need for further investigation into the context-specific challenges faced by educational institutions and the development of tailored solutions to enhance the quality of online education in different regions and contexts.

The field of medical education has also experienced significant disruption due to the pandemic. Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) highlighted the rapid and innovative use of technology in maintaining teaching and learning in medical education, while Rajab et al. (2020) discussed the specific challenges to online medical education during the pandemic. These studies suggest that future research should focus on exploring innovative technological solutions and best practices in medical education to optimize and enhance the learning experience for medical students, ensuring they receive the necessary training and support in this critical field.

The sudden shift to virtual teaching has also impacted Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs. Ramsetty and Adams (2020) explored the challenges and opportunities that have emerged for teacher candidates in these programs, suggesting the need for further research into the effects of virtual teaching on ITE. Developing effective strategies to support teacher candidates as they navigate the new educational landscape is essential for preparing future educators.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed demonstrates the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global educational landscape, particularly regarding the shift towards online learning and the associated challenges and opportunities. However, there remain knowledge gaps in understanding the specific challenges faced in different educational contexts, the development of resilient education systems, addressing social and psychological impacts, and optimizing online education in various disciplines.

Pedagogical Challenges in the Philippines During the Pandemic

The onset of the pandemic has precipitated a seismic shift in the landscape of education, presenting public elementary school teachers with an array of unprecedented pedagogical challenges. Notably, the recent pandemic event was seen like the 1918 flu pandemic which forced the international closure of schools and generally ended formal education, much to the present global Coronavirus problem (Ager et al., 2020).

In the Philippine setting, the public health emergency has established a new norm requiring mask use, physical separation, and hand washing. DepEd anticipates enrolling 27 million learners for the 2020–2021 school year. The Mindanao region's Alternative Learning System (ALS) utilized online learning tools such ICT4ALS, FB Talk, Google Classroom, Aral Muna, and DepEd Commons throughout the quarantine period. DepEd also recommended utilizing radio-based activities, which required forming alliances with neighborhood radio stations. Radio is seen as a potential tool for teaching lessons. Experts also suggested that for those who do not have access to technology and networking, door-to-door distribution of workbooks, home learning activity sheets, and home-based portfolio completion may be done (Talidad & Toquero, 2020).

The Philippine educational system has used blended learning for some time. Additionally, many institutions and universities worldwide have long since embraced these concepts. DepEd has no choice but to switch from conventional methods to blended learning during this pandemic. The DepEd Secretary instructed us to exhaust all available options to avoid interfering with the start of classes in the upcoming SY 2020–2021. However, there were no difficulties with this change. Combining the lack of a supportive and conducive learning environment at home for most learners with the use of technology in public schools in the nation remains a significant problem for the national government. To mitigate this, DepEd proposed realigning funds from the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenditure (MOOE) projects and programs and encouraged the use of the Special Education Fund (SEF) of Local Government Units (LGUs) as a counterpart fund to ensure a successful implementation of blended learning in the region. DepEd also stressed that the support of different stakeholders is essential to help learners, particularly those who cannot afford all the facilities (Department of Education, 2021).

Teachers nationwide welcomed the challenge of transitioning from traditional teaching to a new norm to protect pupils from the coronavirus. Many of them look for opportunities and enlist the aid of younger generations to assist them in navigating a contemporary and unique learning style so they can be more ready to provide their learners with quality education. Not even the lack of internet access has impeded teachers' excitement for new teaching and learning approaches (Singh et al., 2021).

The transition to online learning in the Philippines has been fraught with difficulties, particularly for students who struggled with poor internet connectivity, lack of access to digital devices, and limited technical skills. Barrot et al. (2021) conducted a study that highlighted these issues, revealing that students faced significant barriers in adapting to the new mode of learning. The lack of reliable internet and necessary technological tools was a major obstacle that hindered their ability to participate fully in online classes.

Teachers, too, encountered numerous challenges in delivering effective education during the pandemic. According to a study by Lapada et al. (2020), the sudden shift from traditional classroom settings to online platforms left many educators unprepared. The study found that teachers struggled with COVID-19 awareness, distance learning experiences, and the readiness of educational institutions to support this transition. The challenges included difficulties in managing online learning environments, maintaining student engagement, and effectively communicating with students.

In addition to these challenges, Hebebcı et al. (2020) investigated the perspectives of both students and teachers on distance education practices during the pandemic. Their findings indicated that the implementation and management of online learning activities were problematic for both groups. Communication barriers, technological issues, and a lack of adequate training and support were identified as significant hurdles that impeded the effectiveness of online education.

Despite the challenges, the pandemic also presented opportunities for rethinking and innovating pedagogical practices. Tria (2020) discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education in the Philippines, emphasizing the transition to the new normal. The study underscored the need for innovative pedagogical strategies that could adapt to the changing educational landscape. This included exploring new ways of teaching that could better leverage technology to meet the needs of students.

Similarly, Rapanta et al. (2021) addressed the post-pandemic challenges faced by higher education institutions. Their study highlighted the importance of balancing technology and pedagogy, stressing the need for a reevaluation of educational practices. The integration of technology into teaching methods was seen as crucial to meeting the evolving needs of both students and teachers, ensuring that education remains relevant and effective in a post-pandemic world.

While much of the literature focused on the challenges associated with online learning, remote sensing technologies also emerged as a significant area of interest during the pandemic. Yuan et al. (2020) discussed the achievements and challenges of deep learning in environmental remote sensing, emphasizing its potential in enhancing environmental education and monitoring. The use of remote sensing technologies offers new opportunities for integrating real-world data into educational curricula, particularly in environmental studies.

In a related study, Cheng et al. (2020) explored the intersection of remote sensing image scene classification and deep learning. Their research highlighted the challenges and opportunities associated with utilizing remote sensing data for educational purposes. The study emphasized the need for innovative methods and benchmarks to effectively leverage these technologies within the educational sector, suggesting that remote sensing could play a key role in developing more dynamic and interactive learning experiences.

With these dilemmas, teachers can learn, relearn and unlearn from the challenges they hurdle during the pandemic. Lessons are worth being told and remembered and are vital in moving forward. Some of the lessons learned by teachers across other countries were evident in succeeding paragraphs.

Lessons Culled from the Pedagogical Challenges to Facilitate Effective Teaching

Learner motivation is always a crucial ingredient in effective learning. During the pandemic, motivation issues took on even greater urgency: how to get learners to participate at all in remote learning, and then, once engaged, how to help them focus remotely amidst the distractions of home. Interviewees routinely discussed how much of daily life in schools could not be effectively replicated online. Allison Sawyer, a kindergarten teacher in Tampa, Florida, shared that transitioning to remote learning was particularly challenging (Hinton, 2020). Additionally, a study published in the *Online Learning Journal* highlighted those teachers across various grade levels faced challenges such as student engagement, adjusting curriculum to the remote format, and the loss of personal connection in teaching during the pandemic (Trust et al., 2020). This absence affects both teachers and learners, particularly in settings with limited technological access and other pandemic-related challenges.

Hedetniemi (2025) emphasized that establishing strong teacher-student relationships in virtual settings is crucial, as positive, trusting relationships are foundational for student success. With limited time and energy available for synchronous online meetings, teachers faced trade-offs in their choices about their time allocation—time spent creating opportunities for connection, social and emotional support, and relationship-building is time that is not paid to content learning. Reich et al. (2020) stated that for this teacher, content teaching would have to wait until these relationships could be rekindled and reformed online.

For teachers working in settings where learners have limited technological access, home settings with barriers to learning, and other challenges of a pandemic, a substantial portion of teacher energy could be consumed simply by trying to maintain these relationships. As one high school teacher in a wealthy suburban district, told us that she is primarily engaged in sending emails, checking on their well-being, recording videos, and sending them to maintain a sense of connection. The main objective is to keep engaged. As for teaching and learning new content? Honestly, that's not a priority, at least not for her (Reich et al., 2020).

With limited time and energy available for synchronous online meeting, teachers faced trade-offs in their choices about their time allocation—time spent creating opportunities for connection, social and emotional support, and relationship-building is time that is not spent on content learning. For this teacher, content teaching would have to wait until these relationships could be rekindled and reformed online.

Moreover, the teacher added, “The most significant difference for me is the lack of feedback in a classroom setting in the digital sphere because when you’re talking, body language feedback somewhat exists if you can see all the videos, but it still is hard. And there’s sort of none of those, that nonverbal and some verbal communication exists to help me manage levels of understanding and flows of the classroom, and all those things that consciously or unconsciously I’m aware of don’t exist. And so that’s been a struggle.” (Reich et al., 2020).

State policy guidelines issued early in the pandemic emphasized the importance of addressing the needs of English learners and disabled learners. Still, those documents typically provided little specific guidance about how to do so. On the ground, teachers and other educators needed to invent new support systems to replace those developed in physical school buildings. For instance, the demand for translation skyrocketed as schools put their entire programs online, and some teachers reported school and districtwide information being sent out only in English. Bonnie explained that the informal, on-campus supports for English language learners were complicated to replace.

The schools have concerns about supporting children who speak different languages, particularly regarding translation assistance and providing appropriate resources. The communication challenges with some families add to the worry, as reaching them remains difficult. The absence of physical presence at the school due to remote work, even for secretaries and principals, means there’s no immediate support for issues that could have been addressed in person before (Reich et al., 2020).

Windschitl et al. (2021) examined the potential for first-year teachers to adopt ambitious pedagogy through collaborative inquiry and the use of specialized tools. Their study underlined the significance of incorporating reform-based practices during teacher preparation and utilizing analyses of student work to drive changes in teaching practice. This finding highlights the critical role of collaborative inquiry and data-driven strategies in shaping effective pedagogical approaches. By focusing on how student performance data can inform teaching practices, the study suggests a pathway for enhancing teacher efficacy, particularly for those new to the profession.

In their 2024 state-of-the-art review, Oudbier et al. examined the effectiveness of interprofessional education (IPE) in health science education. The study synthesized existing literature to identify factors influencing IPE outcomes, focusing on the design and delivery of educational interventions. The authors highlighted the importance of well-structured IPE programs and proposed strategies to optimize IPE implementation. They emphasized the need for further research to establish best practices in interprofessional education. Such strategies are essential in preparing students for the complexities of real-world professional environments, where teamwork and collaboration are increasingly vital. The study suggests that by embedding these skills within the curriculum, teachers can better prepare students to meet the demands of their future careers.

The impact of technology on pedagogy, especially in the context of remote or online learning, was examined by Yates et al. (2020). Their study focused on high school students’ experiences of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing the significant influence of both technology and pedagogical approaches on students’ learning experiences. This research underscored the importance of adapting teaching methods to align with the evolving technological landscape, particularly in the context of online education. As technology becomes increasingly integral to education, there is a pressing need for pedagogical strategies that effectively harness its potential to enhance learning outcomes.

To build this point, a study of Aljehani (2024) on enhancing student learning outcomes, his findings suggested that effective technology integration, when combined with appropriate pedagogical strategies and strong leadership support, can significantly enhance learner engagement and improve educational outcomes. The study emphasized the importance of aligning technological tools with pedagogical objectives to create meaningful and impactful learning experiences. Another relevant study made by Mendoza et al. (2024) examined the use of redesigned classroom spaces, enhanced with technology, to facilitate active learning (AL) strategies. Results indicate that transforming physical learning environments to be more flexible and interactive is key in supporting the adoption of AL in university courses. The study highlights the importance of creating adaptable learning spaces that encourage student participation and engagement, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes.

These studies underscored the necessity of thoughtfully integrating technology with pedagogical strategies to enhance learning outcomes. They highlight the importance of aligning technological tools with educational objectives and creating interactive learning environments that foster student engagement. In conclusion, the pandemic has served as a profound learning experience for teachers worldwide. The abrupt shift to remote learning highlighted the critical importance of adaptability and digital literacy in education. Teachers have learned to navigate new technologies, overcome barriers to connectivity, and find innovative ways to engage learners in virtual environments.

Moreover, the pandemic underscored the significance of building and maintaining a sense of community and support within the educational setting. The challenges faced, from limited resources to communication barriers, emphasized the need for resilience and creativity in the face of unprecedented disruptions. As schools gradually return to normalcy, the lessons learned during this challenging

period will undoubtedly continue to shape and inform the evolving landscape of education, fostering a more inclusive, flexible, and technologically integrated approach to teaching and learning.

Lessons Culled from the Pedagogical Challenges to Facilitate Effective Learning

Perhaps it is time to move beyond our fixation on instructing, disseminating information, and delivering presentations through modern and sophisticated educational technology tools. During times of crisis, when individuals may be experiencing trauma, stress, and psychological pressure, it is essential to consider whether the focus of education should be on imparting academic content or on teaching skills related to sharing, collaboration, and support. It is necessary to remember that once the situation returns to its pre-pandemic state, individuals are unlikely to retain the specific educational material imparted to them. Instead, their recollection is likely centered on their emotional experience, the level of care and concern they received, and the degree of support extended to them. It is imperative to acknowledge that care is an inherent aspect of human existence and that individuals universally desire to receive care.

Considering the perspective that the current situation represents a significant trial of online learning and an occasion to evaluate pedagogical approaches, it is advisable to enhance emotional presence to foster an atmosphere of empathy and concern. Subsequently, attention should be directed toward various forms of existence, including teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence (Alrefaie et al., 2020).

Garcia et al. (2020) opined that amidst the swift implementation of emergency remote teaching, is there adequate emphasis being placed on the learners and the learning process? Learners are inundated with lectures akin to a swarm of locusts, all while situated before a webcam. The current emphasis on learner engagement appears to have diminished in significance. Drawing from the arguments above, prioritizing establishing supportive communities and disseminating knowledge and experience is crucial in facilitating effective and substantial learning processes. The learning processes should be oriented towards therapy, empathy, and care, rather than solely acquiring knowledge. We must demonstrate our dedication to assisting our learners and implementing a teaching and learning approach that prioritizes a pedagogy of care rather than relying solely on didactic and unfeeling methods.

Regrettably, no magic exists to rectify circumstances, and it is widely acknowledged that a universal approach is no longer practical. Before implementing any strategies, it is imperative to consider many variables, such as the intended audience, age demographic, technological resources, and prevailing social and economic conditions. Saavedra (2020) posits that developed nations have an edge in implementing emergency remote teaching. However, it should be noted that this assertion does not hold across all countries. According to Adam (2020), there is an argument that suggests that the benefits of pivot online will only be accessible to those who are privileged.

As opined by Guterres (2020), the pandemic and its response disproportionately affected the most impoverished and susceptible individuals within society. Regrettably, numerous nations have already experienced disruptions to their educational systems, and for a significant portion of them, this is not a novel storyline. From a Darwinian perspective, the notion of survival of the fittest cannot be deemed acceptable in this scenario. The dissemination and elucidation of universal principles and recommendations to bridge gaps is a fundamental aspect of our pedagogical approach. However, regrettably, the persistence of the digital divide poses a significant challenge, resulting in a shortage of educational opportunities for many individuals.

The statement above suggests that the expansion of involvement and advocacy for fairness and impartiality remain significant topics that require attention. While the initial disruption to education may warrant some leniency towards excuses and mistakes, it is essential to consider the potential impact of subsequent waves of interruption. As previously stated, emergency remote teaching is not a discretionary choice but a mandatory responsibility.

If we continued to exhibit a pattern of rationalizing our actions and committing errors, what justification will we provide forthcoming generations? Consequently, it is imperative that we make adequate preparations beforehand, derive valuable lessons from our misconceptions, and prevent the recurrence of historical events. To ensure that future generations perceive our actions as appropriate, we must make adequate preparations and restructure distance education using both online and offline modalities to effectively address any disruptions to the educational process (Bozkurt et al., 2020).

Emergency remote teaching, as discussed by Ferri et al. (2020), presents several significant challenges. Technological issues, such as Internet connectivity problems and a lack of access to electronic devices, are major obstacles that hinder the implementation of remote education. In addition to technological barriers, there are pedagogical challenges related to insufficient digital skills among both educators and students, as well as poorly structured educational content. These issues are exacerbated by social challenges, including the lack of human interaction and insufficient support from parents, which further diminish the effectiveness of remote learning. Moreover, Mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL) introduces another set of pedagogical challenges. Both Ferri et al. (2020) and Burston and Giannakou (2022) emphasized that the behaviorist, teacher-centered approach commonly associated with MALL is increasingly misaligned with modern pedagogical methodologies. Besides, challenges related to unequal access to technology and the lack of hardware standardization further complicate the adoption of MALL. These findings suggest the necessity of aligning MALL with contemporary pedagogical approaches and addressing disparities in technology access to enhance learning outcomes effectively.

In the specific domain of language learning, Burston and Giannakou (2022) highlighted challenges associated with using pedagogical agents. The need for on-screen text communication and the varying effectiveness of these agents depending on students' educational

levels are critical concerns. This underscored the importance of tailoring pedagogical strategies to students' developmental stages to optimize learning experiences. Effective integration of pedagogical agents requires a nuanced understanding of how different students interact with technology and the content delivered through these agents.

Social media has emerged as a potential agent to support teachers' professional learning and facilitate pedagogical change. A recent study by van Bommel and Liljekvist (2021) examined how mathematics teachers engage in informal professional development through social media and social network sites. The researchers found that teachers actively initiate and orchestrate their own professional learning online, utilizing platforms to share resources, discuss pedagogical strategies, and collaborate with peers. This digital engagement has facilitated pedagogical changes by providing teachers with immediate access to diverse ideas and practices, thereby enhancing their instructional approaches. By nurturing a collaborative and dynamic learning environment, social media platforms can play a vital role in enabling teachers to share best practices, access new resources, and engage in continuous professional development.

Blended learning, which combines face-to-face and online instruction, also presents significant pedagogical challenges. A recent study by Shah et al. (2024) delved into the challenges educators encounter when implementing blended learning in postgraduate health professions education. Through qualitative analysis, the researchers identified several key obstacles such as Technological Barrier where educators reported difficulties due to inadequate infrastructure and limited access to necessary technology, which hindered the seamless integration of online components with traditional face-to-face instruction. Moreover, the study highlighted a significant need for comprehensive training programs to equip educators with the skills required to design and deliver effective blended learning curricula. Likewise, maintaining student motivation and participation in a blended learning environment emerged as a considerable challenge, with educators seeking effective strategies to foster active learning both online and offline. This study underscored the multifaceted pedagogical challenges inherent in blended learning environments and offers insights into potential strategies for effective implementation.

Finally, the preparation of business and management majors presents its own set of pedagogical challenges. Chiu et al. (2021) highlighted the persistent gap between the skills emphasized in educational programs and the demands of the industry. Despite ongoing calls for change over the past decades, there remains a significant need to address this gap through curriculum reform and the incorporation of relevant management skills into educational programs.

In conclusion, this literature review underscored the diverse and multidimensional nature of pedagogical challenges across various educational contexts. From emergency remote teaching to language learning, teacher professional development, and discipline-specific education, these challenges require targeted interventions and strategic planning to enhance the quality and equity of education. Future research should explore innovative pedagogical approaches, leverage technology for inclusive learning, and reimagine teacher training programs to address these evolving educational needs. Addressing these challenges is imperative for fostering effective and inclusive learning environments that can adapt to the rapidly changing demands of the educational landscape.

With all these narratives, it is worth noting that teachers have lessons and dilemmas during the pandemic. It is essential to delve into the local setting of Filipino Teachers.

Methodology

Research Design

I employed qualitative research methodology in this study. Scientific study typically entails examining a solution to a question, such as qualitative research. It methodically employs a predetermined set of dealings to address the query, gathers evidence, extracts pieces of information that have not been previously told, and generates conclusions that are applicable beyond the immediate scope of the study (Creswell, 2013).

Specifically, I have used the narrative inquiry approach because teachers, like all people, are storytellers who live historical lives both individually and socially. Narrative research has become an essential approach to understanding educational practices and personal experiences. It allows us to explore how individuals perceive and make sense of the world around them. By collecting and sharing these personal stories, narrative researchers help bring real-life experiences to the forefront, offering valuable insights into the way people learn and grow (Naicker, 2020).

Participants

My participants were 6 teachers of Pedro Acharon Sr. Central Elementary School coming from various grade levels. Hennink and Kaiser (2022) supported that as few as 6 participants may be sufficient for qualitative research to reach code saturation, particularly in studies with a narrow scope and homogenous study populations. These teachers taught in the online/blended learning modality during the pandemic.

I ensured that my participants were aware of their position in the group, mindful of the topic or issue under review, prepared to engage in the progress of the analysis and able to communicate effectively and show impartiality in all or their convictions. I also assigned them a code name for confidentiality purpose in the presentation on the results namely P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6 where P stands for participants.

Instrument

Data collection involved semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with the teachers to explore their pedagogical challenges and the lessons learned. The interviews followed a guide with predetermined topics but allowed flexibility for additional questions and modifications based on participants' responses. To capture detailed insights, I used audio recorders and took notes during the interviews. The process also included orientation to explain the purpose of the study to participants and adherence to ethical standards throughout the interviews.

Following the interviews, the recorded data was transcribed and analyzed using coding methods. To ensure the validity and authenticity of the findings, the transcribed results were shared with the participants for review. This final step was crucial for verifying that their narratives were accurately represented and to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research outcomes. The iterative process of feedback and validation was aimed at confirming the accuracy of the transcriptions and the integrity of the data analysis.

Procedure

The analysis of the data from the in-depth interviews involved a step-by-step thematic analysis process, as outlined by Sundler et al. (2019). Initially, transcripts from the recorded interviews were carefully reviewed to identify recurring patterns and themes. Thematic analysis was employed to understand and interpret the meanings derived from these interviews, focusing on patterns and significant insights across the data.

Next, coding was applied to the transcribed data. This process involved systematically categorizing responses to facilitate the interpretation of results. Coding allowed for an artistic and imaginative approach to understanding the data, enabling analysis of participants' experiences and perspectives. This method of analysis helped in connecting responses to relevant theories, studies, and research.

Finally, the findings were interpreted, evaluated, and reflected upon in the context of existing literature and related studies. Responses were compared with similar theories and research to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the conclusions drawn. This reflective process aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and to situate the findings within the broader academic discourse.

Ethical Considerations

I ensured that all ethical considerations were followed as mandated by Holy Trinity College of General Santos City because it helps to avoid engaging in practices that may implicitly or explicitly abuse or exploit those whom I sought to do the research with.

Before the conduct of my study, I employed informed consent by making sure that the six participants received and understood all the information they needed to decide whether they wanted to participate or not. I asked an approval from the graduate school to permit me to conduct my study and asked an approval from the Division Office of General Santos City down to the respective school in Pedro Acharon Sr. Central Elementary School where the locale of my study was conducted. I secured an informed consent from my participants stating my purpose for my research and the possible risks and benefits in taking part in this study.

The participants were free to choose as their voluntary participation whether to participate or not in the conduct of the in-depth interview without any pressure or coercion. All participants were informed that they could withdraw from, or leave, the study at any point without feeling an obligation to continue. The participants were assured that they did not need to provide a reason for leaving the study. Moreover, participants involved in my study were not disclosed based on the information that they contributed to my study to ensure data privacy. As a researcher, I respected the right to privacy of my participants. Even if I cannot collect data anonymously, I still secured as much confidentiality the best that I could.

My study was conducted reflecting gender sensitivity as a commitment to fairness, equality, and inclusivity. The diverse experiences, perspectives, and contributions of my participants are well considered across genders, ensuring that no gender biases or reinforced stereotypes existed. This approach did not only help enhance the validity and reliability of research findings but also promoted social justice by contributing to a more equitable and inclusive body of knowledge.

Finally, this research recognized that cultural sensitivity could significantly impact the interpretation and applicability of my findings. Thus, I ensured to acknowledge the unique values, norms, and practices inherent in various communities where my participants are coming from. By doing so, I aimed to present a more inclusive and contextually relevant analysis that respects and accurately represents diverse perspectives.

Results and Discussion

This section presents a discussion of the results of the in-depth interview on the pedagogical challenges and lessons learned by the teachers during the pandemic.

The results (see Table 1) present the pedagogical challenges experienced by public school teachers during the pandemic. Based on the content analysis, these challenges were themed as difficulty in monitoring learners' progress, learners' poor study habits and attendance,

low attendance rate of learners, lack of educational digital skills, and technological resources.

Table 1. *The Pedagogical Challenges of Public School Teachers During the Pandemic*

<i>Major Themes</i>	<i>Core Ideas</i>	<i>Frequency of Responses</i>
Difficulty in Monitoring Learners' Progress	Limited Assessment Tool	General
Learners' Poor Study Habits	Academic Dishonesty	General
	Distractive Surrounding	General
	Lack of Motivation and Participation	Typical
Low Attendance Rate of Learners	Mental Health Concerns	General
	Family Responsibilities and Disruptions	General
Lack of Educational Digital Skills	Poor Internet Connectivity	General
	Inability to Use Digital Tools	Typical
Lack of Technological Resources	Limited Digital Options	Typical

Difficulty in Monitoring Learners' Progress

The first theme that emerged from the result of this study shows that the teachers encounter challenges in monitoring learners' progress. Monitoring learners' progress during the pandemic in education has presented unique challenges, as traditional in-person assessments have been disrupted. Educational institutions have increasingly relied on remote learning platforms and digital tools to track learners' engagement, completion of assignments, and participation in online discussions. This shift has emphasized the importance of adaptable assessment methods and proactive communication between educators, learners, and parents to ensure continuous support and academic success.

Limited Assessment Tool. Comes online mode or modular mode in the teaching-learning process, the teachers are only limited to a narrow array of assessment tools to be used in measuring how much of the learning has been acquired by the learners. Most of the time, teachers are forced to create paper and pencil tests assessment types since they strongly consider the resources that may not be available in the learner's home should they require outputs that demand numerous materials. For instance, they often refuse to ask learners to create and use digital tools because they lack digital resources at home, and they understand that the learners are also not yet ready to use these tools. As expressed by the participants:

"Lisod jud kaayo mag-assess sa mga bata sir." (P1, Line 27)

("It's really difficult to assess the kids, sir.")

"Ang pagkuha og assessment sa mga bata sa ilang performance sa online class is very minimal or kulang, sir." (P2, Lines 22-23)

("Assessing the kids based on their performance in online class is severely lacking, sir.")

"Naglisod jud ko, sir, kay bisan pinaagi sa online quizzes ug activities, dili man gihapon nako makita ang tinuod nilang understanding." (P3, Lines 14-15)

("I really struggle, sir, because even through online quizzes and activities, I still can't see their true understanding.")

This is also supported by:

"Kung mag-ask naman ako na i-video nila or gumawa ng short skit, hindi lahat makasubmit kasi walang internet, walang phone". (P4, Lines 36-37)

("I can't also ask them to make a video or skits because not everyone can submit due to lack of device and resources".)

"Ang akosa jud problema, sir, kay ang pagpanghatag og assessment sa mga bata." (P5, Lines 18-19)

("My main problem, sir, is giving assessment to the kids.")

"Dili gihapon kompleto ang ilang partisipasyon ug dako ang epekto sa ilang mga resources nga kulang." (P6, Lines 32-33)

("Their participation is still incomplete, and the lack of resources greatly affects them.")

Based on a study on Reshaping Assessment Practices in a Philippine Coronavirus Disease 2019 Crisis, the results showed that assessment practices were contextually reshaped as classes were suspended at the time when assessment evidence cannot be computed; limited internet connectivity posed logistical issues to move to online assessment; and institutional tradition of maintaining quality draws a major concern (Cahapay, 2020). Moreover, Shigemura et al. (2020) primarily explored the mental health implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on various populations, shedding light on the broader impacts of the crisis. The research delved into the limitations of assessment tools used during this period. Public school teachers faced significant challenges with these tools, as conventional assessment methods struggled to adapt to remote learning environments. The inadequacy of these tools hindered teachers' ability to accurately gauge student performance and provide meaningful feedback, thereby affecting the overall quality of education delivered.

The ongoing pandemic has necessitated a shift to online and modular modes of teaching, posing challenges for teachers, particularly regarding the limited availability of assessment tools. Teachers have often resorted to traditional paper and pencil tests due to resource constraints in students' homes, as highlighted by Arora and Srinivasan (2020) and Callo and Yazon (2020). Akimov and Malin (2020) further explored difficulties in adapting traditional assessment methods to the online environment, reflecting broader struggles in the teaching-learning process. Despite these insights, gaps remain in exploring alternative assessment tools suitable for resource-constrained environments, such as digital multimodal compositions and VR-based assessments as suggested by Hafner and Ho (2020). Thus, future research should also address how these limitations affect student learning outcomes, underscoring the need for innovative approaches to assessment in online and modular education settings.

Academic Dishonesty. The remote learning set-up during the pandemic has posed doubts to the teachers on the honesty of learners in answering their summative tests and modules. This is because the teachers cannot see right in front of their faces whether the learners are answering their modules honestly or they may be helped by some other members of their family. Thus, they are unsure if the assessment result shows the true learning gained by the learners. In this regard, Akacha and Awad (2023) expressed the need for continuous evaluation and implementation of security patches to maintain the integrity of online education systems. During the discussion, the teachers explicitly said:

"Ang pagpaniguro nga tinuod nga ang mga bata ra gyud ang nagbuhat sa ilang assignments ug exams." (P1, Lines 16-17)

("to ensure that it's really the kids who are doing their assignments and exams.")

"Usahay, sir, makita nako nga ang mga tubag sa mga bata parehas sa tubag sa libro o sa internet." (P2, Lines 13-14)

("Sometimes, ma'am, I see that the answers of the kids are the same as those in the book or on the internet.")

"Mahirap lang talaga mag-make sure na ang mga bata ang sasagot ng kanilang mga modules at summative test." (P3, Lines 21-22)

("It's really hard to make sure if it was really the kids who answered their modules and summative tests.")

It was further added that:

"bisan unsaon nako pagpakita sa example, daghan gihapon ang magpatabang sa ilang mga parent." (P4, Lines 39-40)

("no matter how I provide examples, many still solicit from their parents to answer their assignments.")

"Bisan mag-online exams na, adunay mga nag-apil nga magpalitanay og tubag o mag-search lang sa internet." (P5, Lines 20-21)

("Even in online exams, some collude to exchange answers or just search the internet.")

"Daghan gyud ang nagahimo og academic dishonesty bisan sa remote learning setting." (P6, Lines 35-36)

("Many engage in academic dishonesty even in a remote learning setting.")

The pandemic necessitated a swift transition to remote learning, presenting profound challenges in upholding academic integrity. Studies by Mukhtar et al. (2020), Elsalem et al. (2021), and Wallace et al., (2021) underscored difficulties in maintaining integrity during online assessments and remote proctored exams, exacerbated by ethical concerns in e-learning environments. The pandemic also affected teachers' motivation and job satisfaction in e-learning contexts (Oh et al., 2025), highlighting broader implications for academic integrity and educational quality. Integrating ethical values into e-learning modules emerged as a potential strategy to enhance honesty among students (Malik et al., 2023). While significant concerns have been raised, gaps remain in understanding the full scope of academic dishonesty in remote learning settings, necessitating further research to develop effective solutions and promote integrity in online education amid ongoing challenges.

With the online platforms being utilized, the most common way of assessment comes in the form of a digital paper-pencil test (Palatino, 2020). However, certain competencies in the curriculum are supposedly best measured in a different way other than paper and pencil but teachers are forced to convert them into an answer sheet form since they understand that learners at home may experience lack of resources should they require other kinds of assessment tasks. Thus, it is recommended that teachers venture into various written works that take part in the grading system such as essays, portfolios, blogs, other than paper and pencil traditional summative tests (Nicholls, 2020).

Learners' Poor Study Habits and Attendance

Another worth noting theme gathered from the participants are the challenges that teachers face in terms of learners' poor study habits and attendance. During remote learning in the Philippines, learners have grappled with poor study habits aggravated by the challenges of online education. The lack of a structured classroom environment has contributed to decreased motivation, irregular study schedules, and difficulty maintaining focus. Additionally, attendance issues have emerged due to internet connectivity issues, digital access limitations, and the demands of adapting to a new and sometimes unfamiliar mode of learning, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to address these challenges. More importantly, learners and teachers have grappled with the lack of a conducive learning space at home, distractions, and the absence of face-to-face interaction with teachers and peers, impacting their overall educational

experience negatively. The combination of these factors has highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive strategies and support systems to address the adverse effects of the online learning environment in the Philippines.

Distractive Surrounding. No school or household has been ready for the effects of the pandemic. Thus, when the country resorted to remote teaching to continue educational operations, every school and home experienced certain challenges in transforming these facilities into an educational one. With poor home and school set-up, teachers and learners are easily disturbed during their classes which often results in lack of focus for the learners and inability of the teachers to maximize their teaching ways. Similarly, the teachers also cannot give their full focus when delivering an online class due to the surrounding noise and disturbances coming from the family members, neighbors, or vehicles passing near their residences. During the one-on-one interview, the participants specifically said:

"Bisan diri sa balay, daghan gyud og distractions." (P1, Line 13)

("Even at home, there are many distractions.")

"Naa gyud mga bata nga mag-istorya sa likod o di kaha magtan-aw og TV." (P2, Lines 16-17)

("There are kids who talk at the back or watch TV.")

"Nahimo lang kong background music sa usa ka bata." (P3, Line 11)

("There was a time when I became background music for a child.")

Moreover, it was added that:

"Ang hirap nung online class sir kasi maya't maya may nag-iisturbo sa akin." (P4, Lines 24-25)

(It was so hard that time sir because from time to time there are disturbances.)

"Daghan gyud og mga rason nga maka-distract sa atong mga estudyante ug kanako." (P5, Lines 25-26)

("There are many reasons that can distract both our students and me.")

"Kanang mga istorya na nagyud sir, nga wa pa ko matapos og explain." (P6, Lines 24-25)

("Someone would suddenly talk even if I haven't finished explaining yet.")

The study highlights the disruptions in learning caused by online and modular education, emphasizing that a conducive learning environment is crucial for effective knowledge transfer. The Philippine educational system was unprepared for remote learning, leading to unfavorable conditions that hindered children's learning. Research by Bhamani et al. (2020) found that students with private study spaces performed better than those in distracting environments with poor lighting, weak internet connections, and noise. As education continues to evolve due to the pandemic, adjustments are necessary to establish a stable and effective learning environment. Teachers faced immense challenges as students struggled with distractions at home, affecting both engagement and instruction. Robinson et al. (2023) called for urgent solutions to support teachers' mental health during this period.

Motivation and participation also declined, as learners struggled to adapt to self-directed learning. Without face-to-face interaction, many students found it difficult to complete assignments independently, often relying on family members for answers. The lack of direct teacher guidance, coupled with parents' limited ability to assist, contributed to a decline in enthusiasm for learning. As a result, students were often encouraged to take their time rather than forcing themselves to grasp difficult lessons, further affecting their learning habits and attitudes.

"Mahirap talaga mag-motivate sa mga estudyante sa online class, kasi minsan parang nawawalan na sila ng gana." (P1, Lines 28-29)

("It's really difficult to motivate students in online class, because sometimes they seem to lose interest.")

"Daghan gihapon sa ilaha ang dili mukuyog sa klase." (P2, Line 25)

("Many of them still won't join the class or really feel like they don't want to study.")

"Nahihirapan ang learners sometimes kasi ang dami talagang activities sa modules." (P3, Lines 18-19)

("The learners are sometimes having difficulties because there are so many activities in their modules.")

"Wala gyud silay gana." (P4, Line 39)

("They really have no motivation.")

The teachers believe that most of the learners agreed on the importance of classroom interaction and learning. Learners prefer synchronized classes where they can raise concerns and inquire rather than tests online where reports on dishonesties were also noted (Putra et al., 2023). Interestingly, a study by Heppen (2020) presented that the community confinement of the learners has a significant positive effect on the learner's performance through their personalized learning habits improving self-efficacy. Long before the formal

implementation of modular learning in formal education, various researchers have already ventured into the effectiveness of using modular modalities though certain similar challenges can also be observed (Nicholls, 2020; Karp and McGowan, 2020).

Low Attendance Rate of Learners

The pandemic has profoundly impacted student attendance in the Philippines, leading to significant educational challenges. During the 2020–2021 school year, approximately three million learners did not enroll or continue their education at the basic education level, a number comparable to the entire population of Quezon City (Uaminal, 2021). Delving with these concerns, the following were notable causes during the interview of the participants.

Mental Health Concerns. The pandemic has caused significant stress and anxiety among students, affecting their mental health. Fear of the virus, isolation from peers, and the uncertainty of the situation can lead to decreased motivation and irregular attendance. The participants expressed that:

"Daghan kanila ang naglisod ug focus sa ilang pagtuon." (P2, Lines 6-7)

("Many of them are struggling to focus on their studies.")

"Usahay maghilak lang ang mga bata tungod sa stress ug kahadlok sa sitwasyon karon." (P3, Line 31)

("Sometimes the children just cry because of the stress and fear of the current situation.")

"Ang pandemic naghatag ug dakong kalisod sa mga estudyante." (P4, Lines 21-22)

("The pandemic has brought great difficulty to the students.")

It was further supported that:

"Ang uban moingon nga di sila ganahan motambong sa klase." (P2, Lines 9-10)

("Some say they don't want to attend classes ")

"Makita nimo sa ilang mga nawong nga dili na sila happy." (P5, Lines 6-7)

("You can see in their faces that they are no longer happy.")

The pandemic has had a profound impact on students' mental health, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and emotional struggles that affect their attendance and engagement in school. Many students have found it difficult to focus on their studies due to overwhelming fear, family problems, and sleep disturbances. This has resulted in a decline in motivation, with some students losing interest in attending classes altogether. The visible signs of unhappiness and mental health issues have exacerbated the problem of low attendance, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive mental health support systems within schools.

Research by Jones et al. (2022) explored the mental health challenges of high school teachers, revealing significant stress and burnout due to the demands of adapting to new teaching methods while managing their own well-being. Similarly, Fong et al. (2024) identified multiple stressors for students, including health concerns, family issues, social isolation, and uncertainty about the future. Studies indicate that while high school and college students reported heightened anxiety and stress, depression levels remained stable (Wang et al., 2020). Notably, female students were more affected by academic struggles, social isolation, and mental health challenges compared to male students. Elmer et al. (2020) found that maladaptive coping strategies significantly contributed to depression, anxiety, and stress among students.

A study by Serrano et al. (2023) found that 35.89% of senior high school students in Metro Manila experienced moderate to severe anxiety symptoms during the pandemic, with limited social support and a family history of mental health issues being major contributing factors. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to address students' mental health challenges. Further research is necessary to understand the pandemic's differing effects on male and female students and to develop effective strategies for supporting student well-being during and after the crisis.

Family Responsibility and Disruptions. With schools closed and many parents working from home or losing jobs, students may be required to take on additional responsibilities at home, such as caring for younger siblings or assisting with household chores, which can interfere with their ability to attend online classes consistently.

"Ang uban nga mga estudyante kinahanglan magbantay sa ilang manghod kay busy ang ilang mga ginikanan." (P3, Lines 33-34)

(Some students need to take care of their younger siblings because their parents are busy.)

"Naay uban nga kinahanglan motabang sa balay." (P3, Line 35)

("Some have to help at home.")

"Lisod para sa mga bata nga nagtrabaho para makatabang sa ilang pamilya." (P4, Lines 11-12)

("It's difficult for children who work to help their families.")

This was affirmed further by more participants:

"Ang uban napugos nga mohunong sa pagtuon aron makatabang sa pagpangita ug income para sa pamilya." (P5, Lines 9-10)

("Some are forced to stop studying to help earn income for the family.")

"Usahay ang mga bata mapugos nga mobiya sa klase aron lang motabang sa mga responsibilidad sa balay." (P5, Lines 11-12)

("Sometimes children are forced to leave classes just to help with household responsibilities.")

"Dako ang epekto sa mga disruptions sa pamilya sa attendance sa mga estudyante." (P6, Lines 33-34)

(The disruptions in the family greatly affect the students' attendance.)

The narratives reveal that family responsibilities significantly impact students' ability to attend and engage in online classes. Many students are burdened with the responsibility of taking care of younger siblings due to their parents' busy schedules, or they are required to help at home, particularly when their parents are unemployed. This situation forces some children to work to support their families, leaving them with insufficient time for their studies. In extreme cases, students are compelled to stop studying altogether to contribute to the family income, or they must frequently leave classes to manage household duties. The overall effect of these family disruptions is a notable decline in attendance, especially in the absence of a strong support system. These findings highlight the urgent need for interventions that provide both educational and socio-economic support to families, ensuring that children can continue their education without bearing the brunt of adult responsibilities.

The global pandemic has increased family responsibilities for students due to school closures and remote learning, significantly impacting their ability to attend classes consistently. Research by Baticulon et al. (2020) and Bhamani et al. (2020) highlighted that caring for siblings and household chores hinder students' academic engagement and performance. Gender disparities further exacerbate this issue, as noted by Feng and Savani (2020), who found that increased family duties disproportionately affect female students, impacting their educational experiences more than their male counterparts.

Moreover, the added family responsibilities have negative implications for students' mental health and well-being, with studies like Cheng et al. (2021) suggesting that these stressors contribute to anxiety and depression, further disrupting online learning engagement. Yates et al. (2020) emphasized that these responsibilities, combined with technological and pedagogical challenges, create significant barriers to students' education. Literature calls for a holistic approach to address these challenges, considering gender dynamics, mental health, and technological factors. Further research is needed to explore the specific impacts of family responsibilities on students and develop targeted support strategies.

Lack of Educational Digital Skills

With the advent of technological advancement before the occurrence of the pandemic, the role of technology has long been integrated into the educational curriculum and system management. Teachers were trained for various functions of technological tools and software, and learners were also skilled with technological manipulation through curriculum integration. However, the result of this study reveals that there are teachers who still find it hard to use technological tools, specifically online platforms, during the implementation of remote learning during the pandemic and some teachers admitted that they lack the knowledge to use online teaching platforms.

Furthermore, as the pandemic has laid bare the stark reality of the lack of resources during remote learning in the Philippines, this has been evident as an emerging theme as expressed by the participants of this study. Numerous learners and teachers across the country have faced significant challenges accessing essential tools for online education, including reliable internet connectivity, electronic devices, and necessary software. The digital divide has widened, disproportionately affecting those in economically disadvantaged areas who often lack the means to participate fully in remote learning. The absence of sufficient resources has not only impeded learners' ability to engage effectively in virtual classrooms but has also underscored the urgent need for targeted interventions and policies to bridge these disparities and ensure equitable access to education for all during these unprecedented times.

Poor Internet Connectivity. The Philippines has been known to have one of the slow and poor internet connectivity all over the Asian Region (Agung et al., 2020). With the implementation of remote learning, this problem has been common to most learners and teachers. This challenge has caused a disturbance during classes and cause them hassle them to move around to look for a better internet connection. Aside from moving from one spot to another, teachers usually end their sessions early as expressed by P6 in the one-on-one interview that having a poor internet connection slows down everything that they have to do in their class preventing them from finishing the agenda for this day's class. As shared by the participants:

"daghan gihapon nga wala makat-on tungod sa walay internet nga dili maayo." (P1, Lines 6-7)

("many still can't learn due to poor internet connection.")

"Usahay, sir, gamay ra ang makasabot sa akong gibasa sa klase kay halos tanan nagbuff og buffering sa ilang video." (P2, Lines 8-9)

("Sometimes, ma'am, only a few understand what I read in class because almost everyone's video is buffering.")

"wala man gyud sila'y maingon tungod sa wala internet." (P3, Line 5)

("they really can't cope due to poor internet connection.")

Moreover, the participants also expressed that:

"Daghan gihapon ang dili maka-submit tungod kay wa'y internet o wa'y signal." (P4, Lines 32-33)

("many still can't submit because there's no internet or signal.")

"Halos tanan wala'y makita tungod sa kakulang sa koneksyon sa internet." (P5, Lines 5-6)

("Almost no one can see due to lack of internet connection.")

"Of course connectivity is a problem." (P6, Lines 13-14)

(Of course connectivity is a problem.)

Internet connection is one of the most important devices in remote teaching, as it enables teachers and learners to meet virtually when physical contact is restricted, such as during the pandemic. However, the absence of a stable internet connection has been a major frustration for educators, hindering them from delivering their intended instruction. In the Philippine setting, similar challenges have been reported by teachers across various schools. Baticulon et al. (2021) identified internet connectivity as a significant barrier in most educational setups during online classes, a finding echoed by Barrot et al. (2021) and Agung et al. (2020).

Similarly, Hodges et al. (2020) explored how unreliable internet connections further complicated remote teaching, disrupting lesson delivery, communication with students, and access to essential online resources. This challenge exacerbated the difficulties teachers faced, underscoring the urgent need for improved infrastructure and support to ensure stable internet access. Without reliable connectivity, the effectiveness of online education remains compromised, making it imperative to address these technological gaps to support both educators and learners.

Inability to Use Digital Tools. The pandemic has accentuated a significant challenge in the realm of online education in the form of the inability of teachers to effectively use digital tools. The abrupt transition to remote teaching exposed a digital skills gap among teachers, hindering their capacity to navigate and utilize various online platforms seamlessly.

Many teachers faced a steep learning curve, grappling with unfamiliar technologies and struggling to adapt traditional teaching methods to the virtual landscape. This lack of proficiency in digital tools not only impeded the delivery of quality education but also highlighted the crucial need for comprehensive training programs and support mechanisms to empower educators in leveraging technology for effective online teaching. Addressing this issue is pivotal in ensuring a smoother transition to digital education and enhancing the overall quality of the learning experience during these challenging times. This was grounded by the thoughts expressed by the participants as:

"kasi hindi pa kami sanay sa paggamit ng mga digital tools bago pa ang pandemya." (P1, Line 19)

("we weren't used to using digital tools before the pandemic.")

"dili gyud ma-gets sa mga estudyante kay wala pa mi kasulay sa paggamit sa mga digital tools." (P2, Lines 3-4)

("the students just don't get it because we haven't tried using digital tools yet.")

"wala pa gihapon mi kasulay sa paggamit sa mga digital tools." (P4, Lines 10-11)

("We still haven't tried using digital tools.")

"Pero hindi pa namin nasusubukan ang mga google meet dati." (P6, Lines 6-7)

("But we haven't tried google meet since.")

Anglemyer et al. (2020) conducted a rapid review on digital contact tracing technologies during epidemics specific to the challenges faced by public school teachers in using digital tools. Many teachers struggled with unfamiliarity and technical difficulties related to new digital platforms and tools required for remote instruction. This lack of proficiency hindered their ability to deliver lessons effectively and engage students. Addressing this challenge requires dedicated research into the support and training needed to enhance teachers' digital literacy and ensure they can fully utilize available educational technologies.

Lack of Technological Resources

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated an abrupt transition to online learning, exposing and amplifying existing disparities in students' access to technological resources. Many learners, particularly in developing regions, lacked essential tools such as reliable internet connections and appropriate devices, hindering their ability to participate effectively in remote education. UNICEF reported that over

1 billion schoolchildren worldwide were affected by school closures, with a significant number unable to engage in online learning due to insufficient technological access (UNICEF, 2020). These technological barriers underscored the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address digital inequities.

Limited Digital Options. Teachers encountered significant challenges in navigating the landscape of online teaching during the pandemic, marked notably by their limited digital options. The sudden shift to virtual instruction revealed the constraints many educators faced in accessing diverse digital tools and resources to create engaging and interactive learning environments. Issues such as outdated technology infrastructure, insufficient training in digital pedagogy, and a lack of standardized platforms further restricted teachers' ability to employ a variety of effective online teaching methods.

This limitation not only impacted instruction but also emphasized the necessity for comprehensive support systems, both in terms of technological resources and professional development, to enhance educators' digital capabilities and facilitate more dynamic and inclusive online learning experiences. During the interview, it was revealed that:

“Kahit mahirap, kahit struggling talaga nung mga panahon na iyon, kinakaya parin kasi wala naming ibang maasahan ang mga bata kundi kami.” (P2, Lines 21-22)

(Even if it was hard and struggling, we still try to make because we are the only ones that the learners can rely on.)

“Sobra ka challenge, sir kay limitado ra gyud ang options sa pagtudlo online.” (P4, Lines 14-15)

(“Very challenging sir because options for teaching online are limited.”)

In addition to that:

“Bisan unsaon nako pagpili og mga digital options, gamay ra gyud ang maayo'ng resulta tungod sa limitadong resources.” (P5, Lines 7-8)

(“It's really difficult, sir, because no matter how I choose digital options, the results are still minimal due to limited resources.”)

“Hindi ako masyadong makamaximize ng digital tools sir kasi hindi ako masyadong familiar sa iba.” (P6, Lines 8-9)

(“I can barely maximize the digital tools because I am not that familiar with them.”)

In 2020, Coman et al. expressed in their study, that while technological utilization was rampant in education before the pandemic, online teaching platforms such as Google Classrooms, Zoom, and Google Meet have been given emphasis which explains why the teacher is not familiar with these digital environments yet. Despite these challenges, it can be observed that teachers still manage to rise above and do their best to fulfill their duties and responsibilities to continuously deliver their promised profession.

Lessons Culled from the Pedagogical Challenges of Teachers to Facilitate Effective Teaching

This section highlights several critical lessons drawn from the pedagogical challenges faced by teachers to enhance effective teaching practices. Results underscored the importance of upskilling and capacity building, emphasizing the necessity of acquiring new teaching skills and strategies. It emphasizes creativity and ingenuity in developing alternative methods for effective teaching, focusing on resourcefulness in accessing materials and adopting innovative teaching approaches. Additionally, the theme of preparedness emerges as foundational, particularly in navigating unforeseen challenges such as health emergencies, highlighting the importance of proactive preparation.

Upskilling and Capacity Building are Crucial for Effective Teaching

Teachers' upskilling is essential for improving education quality, ensuring they stay updated on instructional methods, technology, and research. The pandemic forced educators to adapt quickly to new teaching modes and digital tools, making capacity building even more critical. Upskilling fosters resilience, enabling teachers to embrace change and maintain high-quality education despite uncertainties.

Learning New Appropriate Teaching Skills and Strategies

The shift to digital classrooms has required teachers to develop proficiency in online platforms, virtual tools, and multimedia resources. Continuous professional development (PD) is vital for mastering innovative instructional methods, including AI integration. Studies emphasize the need for PD programs that help educators evaluate AI-generated content and guide students in its ethical use. Teachers also prioritize individualized learning, differentiated instruction, and effective online assessments to ensure adaptive and inclusive education.

Creativity and Ingenuity in Developing Alternative Methods for Effective Teaching

During the pandemic, teachers demonstrated exceptional resourcefulness in adapting to remote and hybrid learning. Despite limited resources, they embraced technology and developed creative methods to ensure educational continuity. Many converted their homes into virtual classrooms, highlighting their adaptability and dedication to quality education.

Resourcing Materials and Methods of Teaching

Teachers actively sought innovative digital tools and educational platforms to enhance remote learning. Collaboration with colleagues helped them refine teaching methods, fostering a strong professional support network. Studies highlight the benefits of teacher collaboration in improving instructional practices and student outcomes. Teachers also tailored lessons to individual learners, used social media for communication, and adopted new pedagogical approaches like digital escape rooms to engage students effectively.

Determination to Accomplish Tasks

Teachers showed remarkable dedication in overcoming remote learning challenges. They spent countless hours mastering digital tools and adapting lesson plans to maintain a sense of normalcy for students. Studies highlight how educators demonstrated resilience and pedagogical flexibility despite limited experience in remote teaching. Their unwavering commitment ensured continuity in student learning and emotional support during uncertainty.

Preparedness is Foundational in Championing Unprecedented Challenges

Preparedness is key to managing educational disruptions. Teachers swiftly acquired new technological skills, redesigned curriculums, and developed contingency plans to ensure uninterrupted learning. Schools with prior emergency preparedness plans transitioned more effectively to remote learning. Teachers' digital literacy, access to resources, and proactive planning played a crucial role in sustaining education.

Preparedness for Health and Other Emergencies

Teachers recognized the need for proactive emergency planning to maintain educational continuity. Professional development in digital literacy and crisis management helped them prepare for future disruptions. Studies show that schools with established emergency preparedness plans were better equipped to handle transitions. Teachers' technological proficiency, attitudes toward remote learning, and strategic planning were key factors in their ability to navigate digital education challenges.

This summary highlights teachers' adaptability, creativity, resilience, and commitment to ensuring quality education during and beyond the pandemic. Their experiences reinforce the need for continuous professional development, institutional support, and preparedness for future challenges.

Lessons Culled from the Pedagogical Challenges of Teachers to Facilitate Effective Learning

This section identifies key lessons from teachers' pedagogical challenges aimed at enhancing effective learning experiences. One major theme emphasizes the importance of monitoring to track learning progress, highlighting how constant feedback helps learners become more aware of their development. Another significant theme underscored the need for proper guidance and support in children's learning, advocating for collaborative efforts between teachers and parents to support educational endeavors effectively. Interactive activities are noted for their ability to engage learners, with positive reinforcement and a variety of learning activities also recognized as pivotal in fostering active participation among students. These themes collectively underscore strategies crucial for promoting effective learning outcomes in educational settings.

Monitoring is Essential to Keep Track of Learning

Teachers had to develop new approaches to monitor student progress in remote learning. This included using online assessment tools and authentic assessments despite challenges. Monitoring strategies focused on evaluating academic performance, engagement, and well-being.

Learners Become Aware through Constant Feedback

Frequent feedback is crucial in monitoring learning and addressing students' emotional needs. Studies highlight the importance of both text and video feedback, with video offering a more supportive and conversational interaction. Continuous feedback helps learners stay informed about their strengths and areas for improvement.

Putting in Place Monitoring Mechanisms During a Crisis was Difficult

Monitoring student progress during the pandemic was challenging, requiring flexible and supportive approaches. Studies found that student engagement became a bigger concern than content, emphasizing the need for personalized feedback and regular communication. Continuous interaction between teachers and students helped sustain educational continuity.

Proper Guidance and Support is Needed for a Child's Learning

Teachers provide crucial direction and support to students, ensuring academic progress despite barriers. Effective guidance requires clear communication and motivation, which help students feel secure and engaged in their learning journey.

Teacher-Parent Collaboration in Supporting Learning

During remote learning, parents played a vital role in supporting their children's education. Active parental involvement fostered a

collaborative support system, enhancing student motivation and success. Research highlights the benefits of teacher-parent partnerships in improving learning outcomes.

Interactive Activities Catch Learners' Attention

Engaging and interactive activities helped sustain students' interest in remote learning. Strategies such as gamified learning, collaborative projects, and virtual discussions improved motivation and comprehension. Studies emphasize the effectiveness of interactive learning environments in promoting student engagement.

Learners Respond Well to Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement played a critical role in motivating learners, especially during the pandemic. Recognizing students' efforts and achievements boosted morale and fostered a growth mindset. Studies confirm that praise and rewards enhance student engagement and emotional well-being.

Variety of Learning Activities Encourages Learner Participation

Diversifying learning activities helps maintain student interest and accommodates different learning styles. Research shows that combining collaborative work, technology-enhanced learning, and hands-on experiences improves engagement. Teachers adapted their methods to create an inclusive and dynamic learning environment.

Conclusions

As we venture into the new normal that comes along dictated by the present global health crisis, our educational leaders continue to search for suitable methodologies to best serve their teachers and learners. This undertaking aimed to find out the lessons from the narratives of the pedagogical challenges of public elementary school teachers.

The true extent of the impact on teachers due to school closures and the shift to remote learning amid the pandemic will remain unknown. Our best approach is to strive to comprehend the experiences of teachers during this period. This study concludes that teachers' decisions regarding learning and teaching processes were influenced by imposed time constraints and the method of delivery, with a primary focus on learners' emotional well-being, and academic content. Furthermore, teachers expressed that their experiences would shape their future teaching, both in traditional settings and in potential future instances of distance learning, should such situations arise while they continue in the profession.

This study and its results underscore the essential requirement for additional research into teachers' experiences during the pandemic and the era of distance learning. A pressing concern that demands attention is the well-being of teachers and their contemplation of leaving the profession, particularly if distance learning becomes a continued aspect in the future. There is an evident need for comprehensive research into the type of training, especially concerning technology use, that would most effectively support both educators and learners.

This research may prove beneficial to school leaders and teachers, applicable in both remote and traditional classroom settings. Exploring content modifications made by teachers across academic areas to accommodate the challenges of distance learning, along with investigating how a project-based education model aligns with the demands of distance teaching and learning, offers promising avenues for further research. These are just a few potential areas, as the opportunities for additional research in this field are extensive.

Considering that I am also a teacher, I could draw parallels between my own experiences and those shared by the informants. Undoubtedly, teaching stands as a noble profession. Reflecting on the study's findings, the narratives of passion, dedication, and commitment from teachers in public schools amid the coronavirus threat might serve as for all. The shared stories not only offer leaders a clear understanding of the need for flexibility and resilience among educators but also provide insights for developing programs and specific actions to support them.

On a personal note, my journey in conducting this research has given me an opportunity to grow and see things differently in a beautiful way. Other than the insights shared in this paper, it has contributed to the grit and persistence that I was able to possess to finish this paper. This undertaking was a long and fulfilling journey for me as the author and researcher. Looking back, it was so wonderful to see myself thriving despite the hardships, difficulties, and challenges – from conceptualizing, finding the problem, organizing the ideas and the paper, conducting the research, consulting from my adviser, and finalizing everything – it was not all just a work in the park. And now that this journey is about to end, I could only be grateful enough for having conquered the needed steps to accomplish this study.

Conducting this study was a significant opportunity for me as it allowed me to connect with the informants, gaining an understanding of their experiences in adapting to the new normal in teaching. Guided by the underlying theory, the study directed me appropriately, and the shared teacher narratives were a profound source of inspiration. I believe the success of this study could contribute to the Department of Education's realization of its goals in delivering quality education, irrespective of the crises that may arise. Describing the teaching profession proves challenging, especially amid the pandemic, given the diverse experiences teachers undergo. Despite the difficulties, teachers view their profession as a source of motivation. Teachers nowadays extend beyond the conventional definition of

a teacher, overcoming challenges to ensure education for all, and transcending physical boundaries and adversities during these challenging times.

Their resilience and dedication highlighted their unwavering commitment to their students' learning and well-being. The pandemic has reshaped teaching methodologies, pushing educators to embrace technology and innovative instructional strategies. Many teachers have taken on multiple roles, serving as mentors, counselors, and even technical support to guide students through digital learning. The shift to remote and hybrid learning has also emphasized the importance of continuous professional development to enhance instructional effectiveness. Collaboration among educators has become more vital than ever, fostering a sense of solidarity and shared purpose. The challenges faced have reinforced the need for adaptability, patience, and creative problem-solving in the teaching profession. Furthermore, the experiences of teachers during this period have provided valuable insights into the future of education and its evolving landscape.

Through perseverance, they continue to inspire their students and fellow educators to remain passionate about learning. Ultimately, the dedication of teachers ensures that education remains a beacon of hope, even in the face of adversity.

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