Exploring the Experiences of Teachers in Delivering Education amid the Pandemic: A Phenomenological Study

Ivy Joy Y. Ravago[1], Haydee D. Villanueva[2]
[1]Department of Education, Division of Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines
[2]Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines

ABSTRACT: The COVID-19 pandemic caused drastic changes in the educational system, compelling public school teachers to adopt new learning modalities. While several studies explored what teachers experienced during the global health crisis, there had been a dearth of studies focusing on teachers handling learners who had just transitioned from the elementary to the secondary level of education. This study explored the lived experiences of fifteen Junior High School teachers teaching during the pandemic period. It was conducted in Tambulig District, Division of Zamboanga del Sur. The phenomenological research design was used, and the participants were selected through purposive sampling. An Interview Guide was utilized to gather the data that were analyzed using Moustakas' method of data analysis. The interviews conducted with the participants yielded several themes describing their experiences. The teachers had to deal with the limitations of modular distance learning during COVID-19, especially since the global health crisis was unprecedented. Not only the learners were unprepared for the abrupt change from the face-to-face instruction but even the teachers themselves. Nevertheless, the inadequacy of training for distance learning pushed the teachers to adopt modalities that could foster the continuity of education amid challenging times. They also innovated their instruction to compensate for the absence of physical interaction that traditional classes offered. Notwithstanding the limited training on distance learning, the teachers demonstrated commitment and resilience to engage in remote teaching. They forged professional collaboration and sought professional upgrading to teach effectively through remote means. The study concluded that the teachers were committed and dedicated to their teaching profession by overcoming the challenges experienced. Thus, school administrators need to upgrade the school facilities, innovate their learning materials, and expose teachers to various professional activities and training to make them better equipped and prepared with the knowledge they can use during the most challenging times.

KEYWORDS: commitment, difficulties, distance learning, Philippines, remote teaching

INTRODUCTION

Amid the pandemic, which started in 2020, the educational system worldwide had to ensure the continuity of education. Hence, schools had to adopt alternative modalities to ensure schooling among learners or students across all levels. However, the sudden shift of learning modalities was a challenging experience for people in the academe, like the teachers as forerunners in delivering education. They had to adapt to the changes regardless of the demands it entailed.

The unprecedented consequences precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic compelled academic institutions to shift to remote education (Anzaldo, 2021). During the pandemic, teachers had to learn about distance education in two months than in the last ten years (Dietrich et al., 2020). In this light, the advent of remote learning for the continuation of the students' learning process has caused difficulties for both the students and teachers in educational institutions in the Philippines (Bustillo & Aguilos, 2022). The Department of Education utilized printed self-learning modules (SLMs) to facilitate modular distance learning (Meniano & Tan, 2022). However, a lack of school funding for the production and delivery of modules was a major challenge for teachers (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020) and students and parents (Anzaldo, 2021).

A study revealed that remote teaching was challenging and impeded teaching quality (Weidlich & Kalz, 2021). Teachers' challenges were identified based on how they plan, prepare, and distribute modules, monitor students' learning, check and evaluate outputs, and provide feedback on students' performance (Castroverde & Acala, 2021). In Finland, the teachers experienced an increased workload due to the shift to remote instruction, making them feel exhausted and experiencing burnout. Similarly, a study conducted in

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China found that the pandemic had increased teacher job demands, negatively impacting their mental health (Zhang et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2021).

With the pandemic, teachers were compelled to display instructional resilience by maintaining teaching quality despite the difficulties of remote teaching (Weidlich & Kalz, 2021). The teachers had to use various ways to cope with the challenges encountered in distance learning. Their coping included time management, innovating teaching strategies, and adapting to the changes brought by the new normal trend in education with the necessary skills for the new normal ways of education (Castroverde & Acala, 2021). The teachers had to continue to function though differently (Raghunathan et al., 2022). To adapt to the technological change, teachers must have attitudes to learn technology, knowledge of technology, ability, and skills to become qualified educators (Mardiana, 2020).

Several studies explored the difficulties experienced by the different sectors of society with the impact of the global health crisis. However, few studies were conducted on the experiences of teachers teaching at the secondary level under the new normal education. Thus, the study was conducted to address the empirical gap in research.

The pandemic caused drastic changes across all levels of education worldwide. In Tambulig District, Zamboanga del Sur in the Philippines, the Junior High School teachers had to comply with the changes in learning modalities as prescribed by the Department of Education. Amid the lack of preparedness or inadequacy of training on distance education, all educators were compelled to adapt to the abrupt changes for the continuity of education. The study intended to explore what these teachers went through with the unprecedented changes in the educational system. The study's findings could help educators gain salient insights into what teachers at the secondary level went through during the pandemic and how they responded according to the demands of time.

MATERIAL, METHODOLOGY, AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Material of the Study

The study was conducted in the Junior High Schools in Tambulig District, Division of Zamboanga del Sur. A researcher-made Interview Guide was used in gathering the data. The research instrument consisted of opening, core, and exit questions. To ensure the instrument's validity, it underwent a validation process by presenting it to experts in the field. Additionally, pilot interviews were conducted using teachers not part of the actual study to establish the instrument's reliability. Questions that seemed confusing or unclear to the participants were revised before the interviews with the target participants were conducted. Fifteen teachers participated in the study. In line with the phenomenological research design, Moustakas' (1994) method of data analysis was used in analyzing the data gathered. The following steps were applied to the data: bracketing, horizonalization, clustering into themes, textural description, structural description, and textural-structural synthesis.

Methodology

The study passed through the Research Ethics Board of the institution. After the paper gained approval from the Board, the researcher sought permission from the Dean of the Graduate School of the institution and the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Zamboanga del Sur for the conduct of the study. The researcher ensured that face-to-face and remote interviews were conducted in adherence to safety protocols for COVID-19 to minimize the risk of transmission. The researcher took notes during the interviews and used a digital recorder to facilitate the transcriptions. Additionally, the participants were asked to review the transcripts for feedback on the accuracy of what was written by the researcher, who then coded and categorized the transcriptions where the most relevant statements were lifted from the transcripts to formulate themes and generate insights and conclusions.

Literature Review

Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, many educators worldwide scrambled to shift their practice from in-person to remote teaching within days. This global pandemic exposed a significant gap in teacher preparation and training for emergency remote teaching, including teaching with technology to ensure students' learning continuity at a distance (Whalen, 2020). The novel coronavirus compounded the stresses facing teachers. Countries had to implement remote education, recognizing and supporting teacher wellbeing had to be given priority (Dabrowski, 2020). Apart from technical issues in the use of technology, the teachers needed more technical skills, and their teaching style needed to be more adapted to distance learning (Coman et al., 2020).

Even if some teachers and certain classes were ready to face the situation, a large majority had to adapt their teaching and learning quickly without training, with insufficient bandwidth for online tasks and little preparation (Dietrich et al., 2020). Teachers had to adapt to unexpected conditions, teaching in unprecedented ways and using synchronous and asynchronous instruction while also being challenged to establish connections with students, families, and colleagues. Teachers' levels of stress and burnout have been high throughout the pandemic, raising concerns about a potential increase in teacher turnover and future teacher shortages (Zamarro et al.,

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2021). A qualitative study on the experiences of public school teachers revealed the difficulty in monitoring, feedbacking, and assessing learning under the new normal education (Jamon et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study yielded the following main themes and sub-themes:

Main Themes	Sub-Themes
-Dealing with the limitations of modular distance learning during COVID-19	- *Impaired practical skills development, social interaction, and peer collaboration* - *Limited personalized remediation and intervention* - *Restricted access to supplementary materials and references* - *Difficulties in providing accurate assessment*
-Adopting and innovating for the challenges encountered	- *Disruption of the learning process* - *Increased burden on teachers* - *Challenges in incorporating multimedia and digital literacy* - *Logistical difficulties in module distribution and retrieval* - *Familiarizing and innovating with strategies and digital tools or online platforms for remote education*
-Demonstrating commitment and resilience for remote teaching	- *Developing adaptation, dedication, and resilience to remote learning* - *Embracing technology and innovation*
-Forging professional collaboration and development amid remote teaching	- *Demonstrating collaboration and support among educators* -*Overcoming technological challenges*

Dealing with the Limitations of Modular Distance
Learning during COVID-19

The global health crisis caused many schools to shift abruptly to various learning modalities, according to what suited best in their respective institutions, in the delivery of distance education. In the Philippines, DepEd mandated the adoption of various platforms through modular learning, TV/radio-based instruction, or online learning. However, the sudden shift in delivering education posed challenges to teachers who needed prior and adequate training. They needed to move away from the traditional face-to-face classes, wherein most public schools adopted modular learning, which required the teachers to produce voluminous documents and adopt the routine of distributing and retrieving modules, alongside the strict adherence to health protocol and standards.

Based on the interviews conducted with the study participants, they claimed several challenges in implementing modular distance learning. They pointed out limitations in the use of the learning modality. The following were the sub-themes identified for the study: impaired practical skills development, social development, and collaboration; limited personalized remediation and intervention; restricted access to supplementary materials and references, and difficulties in providing accurate assessment.

Impaired practical skills development, social interaction, and peer collaboration. Participant 5 claimed it took more work for teachers to ensure that the learners learned effectively by using modules for instruction and providing them with performance tasks. Some subjects and topics required the learners to show how well they understood the process or developed the required competencies. The teachers could not expound the basic skills and competencies that the learners were supposed to develop and master, as indicated in the Curriculum Guide given by DepEd. However, the absence of face-to-face instruction made it difficult for the teachers to ensure the learners' understanding of certain concepts. As cited by Participant 5, *"The absence of hands-on activities and practical demonstrations hindered students' practical skills development. Teachers faced challenges in making learners fully grasp certain concepts, particularly in subjects like Science or vocational courses."*

This statement of the participant implies that hands-on activities and practical demonstrations took much work to deliver effectively in distance learning. Especially since there could be subjects that entailed the use of technical terms, print modules might not

be enough to explain the important concepts. Unlike in traditional classroom instruction, teachers could use audio-visual materials to help explain or elaborate salient ideas or subject matter.

The study further disclosed that the teachers found modular distance learning to impede social interaction and peer collaboration among learners. There was no actual presence of teachers and students in distance learning. Participant 7 cited, "*The lack of social interaction and peer collaboration impacted students' social development and ability to work effectively in teams.*" While the teachers spent their time and effort doing school-related documents needed for modular learning, the learners stayed in their homes and localities. There was no opportunity for the learners to interact socially with their classmates and teachers, which could have been part of the learning process. More importantly, the teachers could not communicate directly with their learners in case of difficulty or confusion on the lessons discussed in the modules. The modality made the teachers feel inadequate in giving input to their learners.

Limited personalized remediation and intervention. As cited in the previous sub-theme, modular distance learning made it impossible for teachers to deliver instruction directly to the learners. Participant 8 cited, "*The absence of regular face-to-face interactions limited opportunities of the teachers for personalized remediation and intervention.*" In public schools and even private institutions, there could be learners needing help to meet the requirements of modular distance learning. Aside from the delays in returning the modules, other learners were unable to answer the assessment activities, nor were they able to comply with the performance tasks required. These deficiencies eventually led to the poor academic standing of some learners, which could also cause worry on the part of the teachers. Knowing the issues or concerns in modular distance learning, the teachers were responsible for ensuring that every learner should be supervised. Thus, the teachers had to do home visits to address the academic concerns of the learners. However, more could be needed apart from the visits done by the teachers to help the learners overcome the learning deficiencies. Unlike before the pandemic, classroom instruction could already be a venue for teachers to cater to learners who demonstrated academic problems, including providing remediation to learners with special learning needs.

Restricted access to supplementary materials and references. The study disclosed the teachers' claim that the learners found it hard to maximize the use of learning materials, especially with the limited mobility caused by the restrictions imposed by local and national governments. Participant 9 stressed, "*The lack of access to a wide range of supplementary materials and references hindered students' ability to delve deeper into subjects, conduct experiments, and explore additional resources to enhance their understanding.*" With the limited understanding that the learners could have of the lesson given to them as indicated in the modules, the teachers could also be having a hard time making the learners learn better so that at the end of a grading quarter, every learner would earn at least a satisfactory academic standing. Except for the learners whose households were equipped with learning resources like internet connection and other educational materials, many solely depended on what the schools provided them. Hence, the teachers were in a dilemma regarding what could be done for learners needing better academic standing since they also had fewer opportunities to provide remediation and intervention.

Difficulties in providing accurate assessment. The teachers likewise claimed that giving authentic and accurate assessments was difficult to administer to the learners in the absence of face-to-face instruction to understand the concepts in the modules. Educators wanted to ascertain if the learners understood the explanations given in the print materials. Though the modules submitted back to schools showed that the assessment activities were answered, they could not ascertain the learners' actual learning. The following were the statements given by two of the participants:

"It became more challenging to evaluate students' actual comprehension and respond to their queries or concerns at the moment." (P1)

"The lack of face-to-face interaction made it challenging to gauge students' comprehension and engagement." (P4)

As claimed by Participant 1, it was challenging for teachers to know how well the learners understood what was discussed in the modules. The learners could not be expected to readily understand the terms and explanations given, especially since they could have varied knowledge and level of mastery of the lessons in the previous grades. Participant 4 implied that teachers could not determine if the learners were indeed engaged in the performance tasks assigned to them. However, it was necessary for the teachers to do a regular assessment of the learners to determine the latter's performance and compliance with the required tasks for every quarter at the end of an academic year.

Moreover, Participant 9 claimed that teachers were compelled to modify the assessment activities they gave the learners. The teachers had to identify which strategy to use in assessing how far the learners learned with the modular learning modality. With the absence of face-to-face learning, the teachers had to be resourceful in using platforms and learning materials. They had to ensure that the tests and assignments given were appropriate to the pace of learning and level of understanding that distance learning offered them.

"I was forced to change assessment strategies during the pandemic, depending more on online tests, homework, and projects to gauge students' learning and development." (P9)

"The absence of practical assessments and hands-on examinations posed difficulties in evaluating students' skills and abilities accurately." (P11)

Participant 11 claimed difficulties in teaching through distance learning, especially in evaluating the learners' abilities, with no actual presentations made possible. Since education could not be limited to the development of cognitive skills, practical or hands-on activities were needed for the learners to perform but were not made possible during the pandemic. Though the learners were given the options in lieu of the actual presentations or demonstrations, the teachers were curious if the young ones were the ones accomplishing the tasks. Thus, the teachers were unsure how to rate the learners' outputs accordingly as supposedly indicative of skills development.

Adopting and Innovating for the Challenges Encountered

The surge of cases related to the deadly coronavirus compelled DepEd to suspend the face-to-face classes. Thus, teachers in general, including Junior High School teachers, had to adopt the other learning modalities despite the need for more seminars and training. The proclamation of the pandemic caused abrupt changes in instructional delivery. The following were the sub-themes formulated: disruption of the learning process; increased burden on teachers; challenges in incorporating multimedia and digital literacy; logistical difficulties in module distribution and retrieval; and familiarizing and innovating with strategies and digital tools or online platforms for remote education.

Disruption of the learning process. The academic or school year had not ended when the pandemic was declared. However, with the risks involved, schools stopped abruptly for the remainder of the period for instruction. Some subject topics were not covered anymore since the face-to-face classes were suspended because, aside from that, DepEd was mandated to halt in-school activities, and the teachers and the other stakeholders feared for the safety and well-being of the children. Thus, academic institutions had to switch to learning modalities considered safe for the young ones, including teachers and other school personnel. The succeeding Academic Year after already adhered to the other learning modalities identified by the Department to avoid direct contact between teachers and learners. However, the study participants claimed how the pandemic affected the educational system. The following were the statements given by two of the participants.

"During the pandemic, learning turned the world upside down, and the learning process was affected." (P2)

"Due to the epidemic, I have to deliver courses remotely, using internet tools, digital materials, modular distance learning, and TV/radio-based instruction." (P3)

As cited by Participants 2 and 3, the global crisis compelled the educational system in the country and maybe in other parts of the world to shift to remote learning. Schools had to adopt traditional face-to-face instruction to remote or distance learning. The modality change was so sudden that everyone was unprepared, teachers and students alike, including parents and other stakeholders. Most schools adopted modular learning wherein parents or adult relatives were tasked to get and return modules at specific times.

Increased burden on teachers. The pandemic brought a tangible burden not only on the learners and their parents but also on the teachers. The teachers were engrossed in preparing voluminous modules for the modular learning modality to take place, with the assistance and cooperation of the parents or guardians. Participant 3 cited, *"The lack of digital literacy among teachers, parents, and learners posed difficulties in using digital tools for learning, navigating online platforms, and resolving technical issues. "* As claimed by the participant, the teachers lacked literacy in using digital technology in delivering instruction, and even learners using online learning modality. Some teachers may need to be equipped with the basic knowledge of using computers and how to connect to the Internet. They had to access the virtual means of delivering instruction when modular and TV/Radio-based modalities were not suitable for the locations or conditions of the learners.

Challenges in incorporating multimedia and digital literacy. The new modalities required resources for schools and, more importantly, for the learners. The teachers faced the reality that only some of their learners could attend classes regularly nor answer the assessment activities properly and punctually, especially since they might not have the needed gadgets. Participant cited, *"Some learners lacked gadgets or cellular phones, making it difficult for them to be reached when modules provided for distance learning were not claimed due to the COVID situations."* As conveyed by the statement, some learners did not have gadgets or cellular phones that could be used for distance learning. Hence, delivering education took much work for the teachers who remained accountable for the learners' academic progress.

Logistical difficulties in module distribution and retrieval. The most common concerns of the teachers for modular distance learning were the distribution and retrieval of modules. They set schedules as to when the parents had to get the learning materials and when the

latter were expected to return the same. If the parents missed the modules, the teachers had to exert the necessary effort to urge the parents to get the learning materials. Otherwise, the learners' academic standing could be compromised. If there were indications of learners dropping, the teachers faced the burden of justifying that they had to do home visits to give prompt intervention. The following statements were given by two of the participants:

"The distribution and retrieval of learning modules presented logistical challenges during remote learning." (P2)

"The lack of immediate access to technology and online resources has presented limitations in the variety of instructional materials I can include in my modules." (P12

Participants 2 and 12 emphasized that their concerns involved the lack, if not limited, of logistics in facilitating the crafting of modules. They implied that they needed adequate logistics to ensure that everything was in place and that they could produce the materials needed to deliver instruction. Based on the teachers' responses, the unprecedented global restrictions were challenging for all.

Familiarizing and innovating with strategies and digital tools or online platforms for remote education. The participants claimed that they had to familiarize themselves with using digital tools or resources as necessary in adopting the new learning modalities. With the new normal education that all teachers had to go through, they had to learn to adapt to those considered the practical means to continue the children's schooling. The following were the statements given by three participants:

"I was able to change my teaching strategies, investigate new technology, and come up with creative solutions to engage better and support my students." (P2)

"My job as a teacher allows me the chance to network with others and exchange materials, concepts, and strategies aimed at enhancing the educational opportunities for all learners." (P8)

As claimed by Participant 2, she had to familiarize herself hurriedly with the complexities of online resources for instructional materials development and integrate diligently to deliver the instruction effectively. The teachers knew that the learners struggled without face-to-face instruction; hence, they had to make the learning materials as attractive and engaging as possible. Thus, as cited by Participant 8, collaboration became a means for teachers to produce desirable materials for teaching. The teachers knew that they had to compensate for the limitations of distance learning through the quality of instructional materials for the varied modalities in place.

The pandemic made the Philippine education system switch to remote or distance learning. It was not an easy recourse for academic institutions, especially public schools, with the scarcity of human and technological resources. However, the stakeholders responded proactively to the trying situations amid the professed difficulties. The teachers found ways to lessen the impact of the new normal education.

Demonstrating Commitment and Resilience in Adapting to Remote Learning

The teachers did not have prior experience in distance learning; they had to adjust immediately, guided by the training and seminars they were required to attend. Despite the inadequacy of experience in distance learning, the teachers had to exert their best efforts so that educating the young would not be hampered by the global health crisis. The study identified sub-themes: developing adaptation, dedication, and resilience to remote learning; embracing technology and innovation; fulfilling learner connections and growth; and building a supportive online learning community.

Developing adaptation, dedication, and resilience to remote learning. Though DepEd was quick in immersing the teachers with programs to somehow acquaint them with the process and guidelines for each modality, these teachers still recognized the inadequacy and need for preparedness to carry out the changes. Nevertheless, they still endeavored to offer resources and support the learners who were the end recipients of the change in learning modality. The following were the statements given by the two of the participants of the study:

"It was satisfying to address equity issues by giving resources and support to learners who had trouble using technology or connecting to the internet." (P7)

"I promoted open dialogue, attentive listening, and empathy to make sure every learner felt seen, heard, and understood." (P9)

As cited by Participant 7, one had to give the instructional resources on hand to extend assistance to those who needed the material possessions to be utilized for instruction and online resources. The teachers were aware that there could be students who could not attend online classes regularly or submit modules on time simply because they needed more resources that could aid them in complying with what was asked. Also, the teachers gave the necessary scaffolding to teach the learners how to use the online platforms effectively. The former also gave prompt notice to the learners in case of scheduled online classes using google meet. With Messenger

as an online application that could be used for group communication, the teacher could make the learners feel the sense of belonging that Participant 9 wanted to achieve with one's group of learners.

Embracing technology and innovation. The teachers adapted to the new technologies as needed during the pandemic. The pedagogical practices for face-to-face instruction were no longer applicable during distance learning. Hence, the teachers had to embrace technology in tailoring their teaching skills and innovating instructional materials. They admitted the need to attune their teaching according to the needs of the most trying time for the educational system to sustain its mandate to provide education. The following were the statements given by some of the participants:

"I demonstrated a wholehearted commitment to my profession by swiftly adapting my teaching methods and approaches to the unique demands of remote or hybrid learning models during the pandemic." (P1)

"To effectively involve my students and deliver education in a distance learning or blended learning setting, I wholeheartedly embraced cutting-edge technologies and new tactics." (P3)

Participant 1 claimed that to be fully committed to the teaching profession; one had to face the challenges with an openness of mind and the right mindset. The teacher implied that one availed of various ways that could help one's teaching suitable to distance learning. Efforts were extended to ensure that the products of endeavors were useful to the learners. Similarly, Participant 3 stated a profound willingness to learn the use of technology and adapt to changes in delivering education. There was a recognition that educators had to upgrade themselves with the available technologies, especially those found most suitable for distance education, as a response to the pandemic.

A study revealed that teachers developed personal, professional, institutional, and community resilience, supporting their capacity to remain committed to learning to teach during the pandemic (Xun et al., 2021). The resilience of a system could be determined if it continues to operate or function as effectively as before a change (Raghunathan et al., 2022). Teachers' resilience promotes effective teaching practices, enhances student learning outcomes, and fosters positive school environments (Johnson, 2018).

The pandemic compelled the teachers to adapt to changes. The teachers had to embrace technology to accommodate the learning modalities suitable to the situation. As educators, they had to demonstrate the qualities of resilience and responsiveness to fulfill their responsibilities in the teaching profession using the learning resources and technologies they could avail.

Forging Professional Collaboration and Development amid Remote Teaching

The new normal education was not easy for teachers. There were changes they had to adapt to meet the demands of the alternative learning modalities. However, the teachers could not have made the demands of the pandemic doable if there were no collaborations among them. Since everyone needed to adjust and respond to the situation, they had to start from the first step. The sub-themes identified included demonstrating collaboration and support among educators and overcoming technological challenges.

Demonstrating collaboration and support among educators. The participants claimed there was evident collaboration among the teachers as teaching professionals. They shared their resources, including ideas and skills. Since not all teachers had the same expertise levels, seeking professional input from fellow teachers was considered most helpful toward the common goal of delivering instruction for the continuity of education. The teachers had to work together to collectively achieve the goals of the schools and the institution they served. The pandemic made the teachers realize the benefits of being united as an institution. The following were the statements given by Participants 1, 2, and 4:

"I sought out professional development opportunities, collaborated with colleagues, and explored new teaching strategies to ensure students continued learning and academic progress." (P1)

"Collaborating with my colleagues, sharing ideas, and supporting one another created a sense of unity and purpose." (P2)

"I built a solid network of educators who exchanged tools, best practices, and methods for overcoming the difficulties that this new environment for learning presented." (P4)

As cited by Participant 1, she had to improve herself to become a more effective educator capable of meeting academic demands. New teaching strategies were explored to ensure that the learners still learned despite the limitations of distance learning. Thus, as stated by Participant 2, the teachers had to work with fellow teachers to attain a common goal. Especially since they had to embark on the sudden shift of learning modalities, they needed to support one another to succeed in fulfilling their tasks as educators. Thus, Participant 4 cited the need to share the best practices among them so that others could also utilize innovative ideas. The pandemic caused them to adapt to the changes, and having one another's support could make a difference in dealing with the challenges confronting them.

Overcoming technological challenges. The participants admitted during the interviews that they had to adapt to the technological requirements of using the new learning modalities. The teachers had to improve themselves to be at par with technologically inclined teachers. As cited by Participants 2, 3, and 11, they had to be knowledgeable and skillful in using technology, especially during the pandemic:

"I improved my abilities to teach using digital media and underwent several professional development and training." (P2)

"During the pandemic, access to professional development programs, workshops, and training sessions played a crucial role in enhancing my skills and knowledge as a teacher, leading to increased job satisfaction and improved job performance." (P3)

"Technological literacy also became a crucial factor." (P11)

Hence, aside from that, the teachers were apprehensive about their preparedness to use digital technology; they also felt concerned about how well the learners could connect through digital means. The teachers recognized the limitations of distance learning, especially with intermittent power interruptions and poor connectivity in some localities. Also, not all learners and parents were exposed to gadgets and other technological devices, and this limitation in knowledge could affect how well they adapt to the changes in the learning modality.

The absence of face-to-face instruction became an obstacle that could be minimized by the teacher's adaptation to the distance learning process. The teachers no longer dominated the learning activities but became the facilitators and mediators (Silalahi & Hutauruk, 2020). Nevertheless, a study indicated the importance of creating interest and understanding of using technology among learners in the learning process (Sutarto et al., 2020).

The teachers demonstrated the value or essence of collaboration. They extended professional assistance as sought by their colleagues. Since the pandemic was unprecedented, they had to work together to withstand the educational demands they were unprepared for. In this study, the teachers proved that extending assistance in various forms and degrees could be very valuable and effective in addressing pressing needs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The pandemic was difficult for all, including the teachers in the academic institution. They had to embrace the changes in the learning modalities by adjusting their pedagogical practices and utilizing the learning resources available. Nevertheless, they welcomed the changes in the learning modalities by exerting the necessary effort that could make them discharge their teaching profession effectively despite the changes. The teachers were determined enough to overcome the challenges by utilizing the material and human resources available to ensure that schools continue to educate the learners amid the global health crisis. Thus, they expanded their knowledge and capabilities as educators by showing flexibility, collaboration, and determination to meet learners' needs. The educators endeavored to attain common school goals by utilizing technological resources and extending support from one another and other stakeholders. In the light of the study's findings, the Department of Education needs to equip the teachers with the relevant pedagogical and technological knowledge and skills through research-based seminars that can make the latter more responsive and effective, especially during difficult times.

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