Online Teaching during the Covid-19 Pandemic: The Philippine Experience

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ABSTRACT

Teachers shifted to online teaching when schools were shut down due to the Coronavirus-19 global pandemic. The study determined the experiences, challenges, and responses of teachers while doing online teaching. A survey through Microsoft Teams was administered to 194 Senior High School and College teachers in Riverside College, Bacolod City, Philippines. Findings revealed that support system was experienced by the teachers through the webinars provided, the assistance of colleagues and housemates, and the help extended by parents to their children. The challenges identified were the extent of students' learning as observed and the teachers' learning climate, their living conditions, work environment, devise used, and connectivity. A positive response was reflected in the teachers' adaptability, level of enjoyment, and work-life balance. Their readiness in the resumption of face-to-face classes resulted from the stress experienced. Teachers' stress levels differed when they were compared according to their department and employment status. Their satisfaction towards the Microsoft Teams platform significantly differed when they were grouped according to their department. No significant difference was observed in the teachers' extent of readiness in the resumption of face-to-face classes when they

were compared according to their department, employment status, and the number of subject load preparations. The results consider the impact of online teaching on the students' learning and the teachers' well-being.

Keywords — Education, online teaching, teachers' experiences, challenges and responses, descriptive survey, Bacolod City, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Long before Covid-19 has caused a standstill across the world, teachers have already been experiencing stress and burnout in their daily teaching tasks. This has been highlighted by the abrupt closure of schools for Academic Year 2019-2020 and the sudden shift to online teaching. The study of Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot (2020) described the challenges that the Israeli teacher education colleges faced during the Coronavirus outbreak. Teachers were forced to make quick decisions on their curricula and syllabi, which needed to be adjusted to the new reality. Respondents learned the need for adaptability and good planning, with emphasis on what is good for their students. In Spain, teachers struggled with stress symptoms such as anxiety and depression (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). In Romania, a study was conducted by Van der Spoel et al. (2020) on the constraints and consequences of online teaching due to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers' perception regarding their online teaching expectations prior to the transition and their experiences a month after implementation were compared. Results of two surveys among 200 Dutch teachers showed a significant change in the teachers' perception after the implementation of technology. Obrad (2020) studied 400 teachers across Romania who had to transfer their lectures online. They had less time to adapt to new technologies, and along with other stressors, their work engagement and performance were questioned as key factors for the sustainability of the educational system. The study explored induced stress, resilience behavior, professional support, and work engagement to highlight the impact of COVID-19 on the activity of the teachers. Work engagement and the role of professional support in the relationship between stressors and resilience mechanisms were highlighted. In the Philippines, results from the study of Rabacal et al. (2020) revealed a moderate impact on the quality of life of Filipino teachers. However, the study of Moralista and Oducado et al. (2020) which was conducted in a Philippine State College revealed that the majority of the faculty had intermediate competencies

in computers, and they had no training in online teaching. There were a few who signified having a very stable internet connection thereby making them perceive online education as difficult to manage technologically. They described online teaching as impersonal, lacking in feelings, and would yield academic dishonesty as compared to face-to-face classes.

In Bacolod City, particularly in Riverside College, teachers experienced stress during the Covid-19 pandemic especially when they had to shift to online teaching. The pandemic alone made the teachers worry about economic uncertainty, the health and safety of their families and the security of their employment. Members of the teaching force were left with no choice but to adopt the necessary tools to ensure the continuity of students' learning. The uncertainty in the opening of classes for the Academic Year 2020-2021 led to so many questions such as "what learning management system should be adopted," "what strategies should be implemented to suit the needs of the students," and most importantly, the question on "how equipped and prepared are the teachers with the shift to online teaching." Moving instruction to online enables the teachers' flexibility, but the process can be slow depending on the availability of support and resources.

After eight months of thriving through the challenges of online teaching in Riverside College, this study finds it essential to evaluate how the teachers have been, how they have managed, thrived, and survived. The teachers' experiences, challenges, and responses toward online teaching in the midst of this global pandemic are very important because they have significant implications for the teachers' well-being and their students' learning.

FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on two theories: the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Kan & Fabrigar, 2017) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT).

The TPB is a theory used to understand and predict behaviors through behavioral intentions and perceived behavioral control under certain circumstances. In this study, the behavior refers to online teaching that was made as a response to the closure of schools, thereby restricting the conduct of face-to-face classes during the global pandemic caused by Covid-19. The teachers' experiences, challenges encountered, and their behavioral responses to online teaching are explored. The study of Alea et al. (2020) revealed high awareness among the teachers regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and its

consequences. Their study showed no correlation between teachers' demographic profiles and awareness of COVID-19, but there was a strong correlation observed between the teachers' length of teaching experience and specialization to their readiness for distance learning education.

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) is another theory on which this study is anchored. This theory on the use of technology was formulated by Venkatesh et al. (2003) in "User acceptance of information technology: Toward a unified view." The UTAUT aims to explain user intentions to use an information system and his subsequent usage behavior. The theory holds four constructs: (1) performance expectancy, (2) effort expectancy, (3) social influence, and (4) facilitating conditions. The first three constructs are determinants of usage intention and behavior, while the fourth construct referring to the facilitating conditions are the direct determinants of user behavior.

In this study, online teaching through Microsoft Teams is the system involved. The intention of this system is to ensure the continuity of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic when teachers had to shift to online teaching. The facilitating conditions refer to the teachers' profile and learning climate in the conduct of online classes. Teachers' profile includes the college/department where they belong, their employment status and the number of their subject load preparations. The teachers' learning climate includes their living conditions, the type of device they use for online classes, the speed of their internet connection, the ownership of their device, and their physical work environment. The facilitating conditions determine the teachers' behavior as end-users of the system (Microsoft Teams), how they are able to adapt to the system as reflected through their experiences, challenges, and responses, which are manifested in their levels of stress, enjoyment, and satisfaction while using the system.

A framework was proposed by Collie and Perry (2019) wherein the important role of social-emotional competence in helping teachers thrive at work was identified. The social and emotional domains of the framework included the teachers' behavior, autonomous motivation, and psychological needs. These domains are promoted by supportive work environments, which influenced how teachers were able to thrive at work.

The importance of creating conditions that will support teachers is something that school administrators should take into account. It is for this reason that this study is conducted to determine how the teachers in Riverside College have managed the shift to online teaching. Their challenges and experiences could

serve as basis for the restructuring of operations to identify better strategies on how to deliver effectively programs and services in a virtual setting.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study explored the teachers' journey in online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic for the purpose of identifying their experiences, challenges, and responses to ensure that the teachers' needs and limitations are addressed properly. Specifically, the study determined: (1) the teachers learning climate in terms of their living condition, the type of devise they are using for online classes, their speed of internet connection, their ownership of the devise and their physical work environment; (2) the teachers' extent of implementation of the webinars given to them; (3) the teachers' experiences in terms of perceived stress level of their students, perceived learning of their students and perceived support extended by the students' parents; (4) the teachers' challenges in terms of social support from colleagues and housemates, preference between online and face-to-face classes, level of stress experienced in handling online classes, level of satisfaction towards the TEAMS platform, and level of readiness to the resumption of face-to-face classes; (5) the teachers' responses to the challenges of online teaching in terms of managing work-life balance, perceived level of enjoyment, and frequency in the conduct of one on one discussion with students; and (6) the significant difference in the teachers' experienced level of stress, their level of satisfaction toward the TEAMS platform, and their level of readiness toward the resumption of face-to-face classes when they are grouped and compared according to College/Department where they belong, employment status and number of subject load preparations.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
The researcher used the descriptive survey method which was conducted online from mid-March to the first week of April 2021. The study describes the teachers' profile, their challenges, experiences, and responses toward online teaching during the Academic Year 2020-2021.

Research Site

The study was conducted in Riverside College, an educational institution in Bacolod City that offers Senior High School and College levels with a student population of almost 4,000.

Research Respondents

The survey instrument was sent to the institutional email account of all the teachers employed in Riverside College during the 2nd Semester of AY 2020-2021. Out of the total 241 teachers, only 194 (80%) responded.

Instrumentation

The study utilized a modified online survey instrument application from QuestionPro with frequently asked questions on distance learning for teachers. Some items were restructured to suit the requirements of the study as determined by the needs of the institution. A letter to explain the purpose of the data collection was addressed to the respondents prior to the first section of the data gathering instrument. There are two sections in the instrument, the first section consists of 21 items on the teachers' profile in terms of their employment status, college/department affiliation, number of subject load preparations, living conditions, learning environment, and the teachers' challenges, experiences, and responses toward online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. All items had a set of multiple choice responses which varied in number. The second section contained the Data Privacy Policy of the institution. The instrument was formulated through the Microsoft Teams Form, and the link to the online survey was sent to each of the teachers' institutional email account. After one week, a follow-up email was sent to those who were not able to respond. The survey was ended after three weeks when the responses were stable at 80% of the total population of teachers.

Validation of the Instrument

The items in the survey questionnaire were exposed to face and content validation by experts who are holders of Doctorate degrees in Education and Master's Degree in various fields of specialization aligned to the programs offered in Riverside College. These experts are members of the institution's Academic Council, representing the different Colleges and Departments. Modifications in the instrument were applied based on the feedback gathered. The second section of the instrument stated the Data Privacy Act of the school in compliance with

the Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which regarded the privacy of the respondents with utmost importance. Respondents were assured of their anonymity and the purpose of data collection.

Data Analysis

The responses to each item were tabulated using the IBM SPSS Statistics 20. The data were treated using descriptive statistics, wherein the responses to all the items were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. For significance testing, cross-tabulation of responses in terms of profile variables was determined using Pearson chi-square.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On Teachers' Profile, Living Condition and Learning Environment

All the 9 Colleges/Departments were represented in the study, Arts and Sciences, Business and Entrepreneurship, Medical Technology, Nursing, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, Psychology, Radiologic Technology, and Senior High School. The majority (35%) of the respondents come from the College of Nursing since it is the College with the biggest student population. Among the respondents, 45% are Full Time, 69% had 2-3 subject load preparations, 90% are living with family members, and 64% declared their environment was "Peaceful" for online teaching, though the degree of how peaceful varied. The type of learning and work environment is important as it affects the teaching performance of teachers. In the study of Ismail et al. (2021), one of the four themes identified to contribute to teachers' functional competency is the school climate through the conditions of their work environment. Similarly, the study of Joshi et al. (2020) using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis among the teachers working in the government and private universities of Uttarakhand, India showed four barriers during online teaching, and these are the lack of facilities, home environment settings, external distractions, and family interruptions.

It is important that the teachers are equipped with the necessary tools to address the sudden shift to online teaching. Upon survey, 87% declared they have a personal gadget for online classes, 74% are using a laptop, and 68% have an adequate supply of internet connection. The study of Baluyos & Clarin (2021) on the lived experiences of teachers in online teaching also showed that majority of their respondents used laptops.

On Teachers' Challenges

Results of this study showed that teachers perceived their students to consider online classes as stressful in varying degrees, 22% of the teachers perceived their students as having a "Very Stressful" experience, and 39% perceived their students considering online classes as "Stressful" and 23% as "Somewhat Stressful." The descriptive-correlational study of Oducado et al. (2021) supports this finding as it revealed that more than half of the teachers experienced moderate stress due to Covid-19.

The students' learning was observed by 35% of the teachers to a "Moderate Extent," 19% of the teachers observed their students' learning to a "Somewhat Low Extent" and 4% to a "Very Low Extent." The study of Code et al. (2020) entitled "Pandemic designs for the future: Perspectives of technology education teachers during COVID-19" supports this finding. Factors such as student access to resources, tools, and materials were identified to have affected student motivation and engagement. Irawan et al. (2020) identified the impact of student psychology on online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and results of the qualitative study in Mulawarman University showed that students got bored with online learning after the first two weeks of learning from home. Students experienced anxiety, especially those whose parents have low incomes. There were mood changes observed due to too many assignments, and these were considered ineffective by the students.

In this study, 15% of the teachers have observed that parents of their students have been "Very Helpful" while 34% have perceived parents to be "Helpful" to their children's needs during online classes. The findings from the study of Dong et al. (2020) revealed that Chinese parents' had negative beliefs toward the benefits of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The parents resisted online learning for three reasons: its shortcomings, the inadequacy of young children for self-regulation, and the parents' lack of time and professional knowledge to support their children during online learning.

On Teachers' Experiences

Students are not the only ones who were stressed out from online teaching. Teachers have also experienced stress in varying degrees, 15% described the experience as "Very Stressful," 28% declared it was "Stressful," and another 28% considered it as "Somewhat Stressful." A significant difference was observed in the teachers' level of stress when they were grouped and compared according to college/department where they belong and their employment status. These

findings are supported by the study of Pressley (2021) on factors contributing to teacher burnout due to COVID-19. Significant predictors for teacher burnout-stress included COVID-19 anxiety, current teaching anxiety, anxiety communicating with parents, and administrative support. The study by Rasheed et al. (2020) showed the challenges of the teachers which are mainly on the use of technology for teaching. In India, the study of Joshi et al. (2020) revealed the difficulties encountered by teachers which included the lack of technical support in technical infrastructure, limited awareness of online teaching platforms and security concerns. There were also identified personal problems of teachers such as the lack of technical knowledge, negative attitude, course integration with technology and the lack of motivation. Marek et al. (2021) conducted a worldwide survey to explore the experiences of higher education faculty who shifted to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings revealed that stress was experienced due to higher workloads as compared to when they had face-to-face classes.

The findings of this study revealed no significant difference in the teachers' level of stress when they were compared according to the number of subject load preparations. Regardless of their teaching load assignment, teachers had the same set of challenges when it comes to their stress level. The case study by Kaden (2020) supports this finding. The case examined the professional life of a secondary school teacher in rural Alaska (United States) who had to teach online due to school closure because of the pandemic. The results demonstrated an increase in workload, and even though online education can support learning for many students, it still needs to be carefully designed to address individual needs to avoid inequality and social divides.

There were negative experiences in online teaching but there were positive outcomes too. Webinars were given by the institution to support the teachers who were struggling with the new virtual setting. The provision of webinars was an emergency response of Riverside College to ensure that teachers were equipped to conduct and manage their online classes. The challenge was accepted and 24% of the teachers found the webinars "Very Useful," while 42% of the teachers described the lessons gained from the webinars as "Useful." These findings on the usefulness of webinars are supported by the study of Agaltsova et al. (2020) where a pedagogical experiment on webinar technology with the help of YouTube showed improved performance and quality of training among future specialists in Humanities. The study by Jumrah and Machomoed (2020) also supports the significance of webinars. Their study showed that the professional development

activities on the webinar helped the English teachers and lecturers with content focus, coaching and expert support, collective participation, and sustained duration. Participants had varied responses towards the most influential part of the webinar to their teaching skills, and positive perceptions towards the webinar were observed. In the study of Rasheed et al. (2020), it was pointed out that when suitable instructional technology and effective trainings are provided, this will support the teachers' challenges. In India, institutional support barriers were identified from the study of Joshi et al. (2020). These barriers include the lack of training and technical support, the lack of budget for purchasing advanced technologies, and the lack of clarity and direction.

This study also revealed that 43% of the teachers found their colleagues and housemates as "Very Helpful," while 42% perceived their colleagues as "Helpful" during the time they were adjusting to the new methods of instruction. Support from colleagues in the workplace and family members or housemates are essential during the pandemic. The struggle to cope with the new learning environment is a stressful moment, especially for those who are not technologically competent. Kraft et al. (2020) examined the experiences of 7,841 teachers across 206 schools and nine states. The findings revealed how working conditions in schools could help teachers sustain their sense of success. When schools can provide good leadership with strong communication and meaningful collaborations, teachers are least likely to feel they are not successful.

On Teachers' Responses

Most of the teachers in this study prefer face-to-face classes over online though they have easily adopted the shift to online teaching. Scherer et al. (2021) determined the teachers' readiness for Online Teaching and Learning (OTL). The study involved 739 higher education teachers in 58 countries, and their readiness in online teaching was determined as multifaceted, some with high, low, or inconsistent readiness. The study by Aliyyah et al. (2020) among 67 class teachers in primary schools of Indonesia yielded four factors that influenced the success of online learning: instructional strategies, challenges, support, and teachers' motivation.

In this study, no significant difference was observed in the teachers' level of readiness toward the resumption of face-to-face classes when they were grouped and compared according to the college/department where they belong, their employment status, and the number of subject load preparations they had. The study of Cutri and Mena (2020) supports this finding wherein the tenure-track

and contingent faculty's willingness to teach online was examined. A critical integrated literature review of 44 studies documented the themes of the affective dimensions and disruptions that surrounded the faculty's readiness to teach online. The study by McGee et al. (2017) among expert online teachers in Delphi supports this finding. There were 11 institutional strategies identified that best support their development of online teaching skills, among which three major areas were of most value: training, external supports, and prolonged experience.

In this study, teachers had varying degrees of how they enjoyed their online classes; 12% found it "Very Enjoyable," 32% consider it as "Enjoyable," and 31% as "Somewhat Enjoyable." However, no matter how positive the teachers' outlook was towards online teaching, stress was inevitable, the reason why they have expressed their readiness for the resumption of face-to-face classes. Niemi and Kousa (2020) described students' and teachers' perceptions during the time of the pandemic, and their study indicated that distance teaching was implemented very successfully, but many challenges were revealed, including students' complaints on heavy workloads and fatigue while some lost motivation. Other challenges observed were on the non-authentic interaction and the lack of spontaneity that in-person teaching provided. Teachers learned the use of technological platforms quickly, but they found interaction through it as not of high quality.

Findings in this study have also revealed that teachers have shown satisfaction towards the Microsoft TEAMS, the platform adopted by the school for online instruction. There was a significant difference observed in the teachers' level of satisfaction towards the TEAMS platform when they were grouped and compared according to college/department where they belong but no significant difference in their level of satisfaction towards the TEAMS when they were compared according to employment status and the number of subject load preparations. Teachers had no choice but to adopt the use of Microsoft Teams as the platform for online teaching that was provided by the institution. The study of Verma (2021) indicates that online work nowadays require the use of communicative teaching tools and software in order for the teachers to interact with their students, such as Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Olympus and Zoom.

When asked regarding how they have managed a work-life balance during the pandemic, 19% of the teachers said they have managed "Very Well," 38% said they have managed "Well," and 20% as "Somewhat Well." Despite the challenges, teachers were able to conduct one on one discussion with their students. In Romania, when they switched to online teaching in March 2020, teachers were

confronted with the need to adapt to the digital sphere, complete with its new infrastructures for teaching and learning. Safta-Zecheria (2020) explored the challenges experienced by teachers, and findings revealed that teachers were faced with the need to develop digital competencies for online teaching. These competencies involved accessing technological and digital infrastructures.

The extent of support given by the School Administrators during this pandemic is crucial to the success of the teaching-learning situation. According to Liu et al. (2020), distributed leadership and instructional leadership are both favorably and directly connected with teacher work satisfaction and teacher self-efficacy. Instructional leadership is indirectly associated with teacher job satisfaction because of the mediation effects of supportive school culture and teacher collaboration. The article by Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) indicated that if challenges during the pandemic are explored and converted to opportunities, then instructional activities will become more hybrid.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study have led to the following conclusions regarding the experiences, challenges, and responses of the teachers toward online teaching: (1) Support system was visible. The webinars provided by the institution, the help extended by colleagues and housemates, and the support given by parents to their children were among the teachers' experiences; (2) The learning climate which supported the teachers' online classes and the extent of learning manifested by the students as observed by the teachers were the identified challenges; (3) Teachers' responses to online teaching were both positive and negative. Their adaptability, their implementation of lessons gained from the webinars provided, and their ability to manage the conduct of one on one discussions with their students were the positive responses as reflected in their level of enjoyment towards online teaching. The stress experienced by the teachers in their online classes was a negative response, but it influenced their readiness in the resumption of face-to-face classes; (4) Teachers differed significantly when their stress level was compared according to the college/department where they belong and their employment status; (5) Teachers differed significantly when their satisfaction towards the TEAMS platform was compared according to the college/department where they belong; (6) Teachers' experiences, challenges and responses to online teaching became opportunities to strengthen their well-being and sustain their students' learning. The conclusions from this study are supported by the article

of Greer and Daly (2020) entitled "Professionally acceptable workload: Learning to act differently towards effective change." The article poses a challenge on the teaching profession to reform views on acceptable workload and external conditions. In this study, the Covid-19 pandemic is the external condition that caused the shift to online teaching. The difficulties encountered by the teachers all over the world are similar but how they have managed their situation in the conduct of virtual classes varied. The Filipino teachers' response to online teaching makes them distinct. The innate character of Filipinos to adapt easily to the changes in their environment made the teachers in this study consider online teaching as an enjoyable experience despite their shortcomings and the stress they have encountered. The teachers of Riverside College opted to embrace the new platform and the new learning environment with positivity in order to survive the pandemic.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The significance of exploring the teachers' journey in online teaching is important for School Administrators. This will help them manage their teachers' well-being in the conduct of online classes as an emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The teachers' challenges, experiences, and responses that were explored could contribute to the enhancement of the school's Faculty Development Program. Webinars that are relevant and responsive to the needs of the teachers can be continually provided to strengthen their teaching and virtual classroom management skills. Appropriate technical support can be extended depending on the required competencies of the teachers. Curriculum revision can be managed appropriately to meet the learning demands of the students in their respective programs.

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