Teachers in Times of Pandemic: An Ethnological Analysis of Coping with the Challenges in the New Normal

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ABSTRACT

People are living in the midst of what is the greatest danger in the course of our lives to worldwide instruction, a massive instructive emergency. The study analyzed the lived experiences of the nine teachers in one of the public elementary schools in the province of Albay, Philippines, regarding the challenges they encountered in the preparation and delivery of instructions in time for the "New Normal." Primarily, this research investigated the stress brought by the shift to the "new normal" system of education from the traditional face-to-face delivery of learning to the teachers of Matnog Elementary School, Daraga North District, Daraga, Albay. Ethnographic research was utilized to analyze the lived experiences of the respondents involved. The study found that the shift to teaching brought much stress on the part of the teachers, especially those who

are not fond of using technology-based instruction. As to how the teachers cope, it was revealed that all available means and resources were tapped in order to be successful and deliver the learning to its clientele. The study concludes that any form of abrupt changes or adaptation of any system will result in anxiety for those on the front line who were expected to deliver the system by all means.

INTRODUCTION

The sudden changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have considerably affected people, their families, and educational institutions throughout the world. They suffered various consequences that affected their mental health (Giuntella et al., 2021), especially along the emotional and affective dimensions because of the imposition of "social distance" (Sikali, 2020) and the need to refocus the personal, social, and professional settings (Strom & Gumbel, 2021). The University of Barcelona, Spain, like many other schools, created its strategies to meet the challenges of the new situation. As a strategy for the teachers to adhere to the policy of "no learner is left behind," the teachers made use of their available resources to ensure the continuity of the teaching-learning process.

Many issues have risen to the top of the agenda of many researchers in different countries. Understanding how students and teachers shape their experiences in this situation is important to assess the condition that affected the students, teachers, even administrators, and the whole education system (Hernández-Hernández & Sancho-Gil, 2021).

This pandemic, which has gripped Asia for more than two years, continued to disrupt education across the region, affecting the most vulnerable learners, the hardest hit, including teachers. This led to educational inequality in some parts of Asia and the Pacific and complicated existing challenges, especially for teachers (Schipper et al., 2022). Hence, there is a need to reshape the personal, social, and professional setting (Strom & Gumbel, 2021).

This study aims to bridge the gaps between international (Asian), regional, and national issues regarding how different higher education institutions address the continuity of student learning in the midst of this artificial/natural disaster. Various learning modalities were resorted to to ensure that no learner is left behind.

In situations where elementary and high school teachers are conducting face-to-face classes, schools and teachers have to adapt to new learning environments in which knowledge and competencies are placed in an unknown dimension, which challenges educators. Many issues have risen to the top of the

agenda of many researchers in different countries. Understanding how students and teachers shape their experiences is very important (Hernández-Hernández & Sancho-Gil, 2021).

The pandemic had effects on teachers, especially the shift from face-to-face teaching to virtual teaching. Based on the analysis, although the effects were mostly negative, the emotional effects challenged them to create new strategies, which had positive effects on re-adoption and collaboration with other colleagues. All of this paved the way for the continuity of the teaching-learning process.

Some recollections of the lived experiences of teachers during the pandemic, both positive and negative, were shared in all educational institutions, especially regarding how the teachers were able to cope with their respective situations in terms of social, personal, and professional aspects. People loved in a context of enormous challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic. All the educators did everything possible for their students just to deliver knowledge in different modalities. These became anxious times for the students and parents. That is why many teachers and school administrators provided reassurance to parents about possible modifications to examination schedules, etc.

No crisis lasts for a lifetime. Soon, in God's grace and time, the order of nature will be normalized. A great deal is inevitable in routine, disposition, approach, mindset, values, and priority. The transition will be laborious and grueling in action, methodology, strategy, and tactics employed, while the "new normal" is likened to a tug-of-war when everyone is being reintroduced to the "old normal." The burning question is how to ensure that learning inside the classroom is delivered effectively and yields better learning outcomes when the pandemic is over.

Mastery of the content is non-negotiable. Regardless of the subject matter and the duration it is being taught, teachers need to constantly face their arms themselves with complete mastery and understanding of the content. We do not just go to our respective classes simply because it is time to go there. We should only face the class if we are prepared and have mastered the lesson for the day. Mastery of one's content will guarantee optimum learning for our students. Every teacher must have a clear grasp and understanding of the five pedagogical approaches mandated by Republic Act 10533, better known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. The five pedagogical approaches are Constructivism, Inquiry-Based, Collaborative, Integrative, and Reflective. It is not enough to master the content because the fundamental and crucial challenge in teaching is how to deliver lessons to the learners with the appropriate pedagogical approaches suited to the varying contexts of the learners. The teacher must be creative and innovative enough to use appropriate, relevant, effective,

and differentiated teaching strategies. As teachers and school leaders, we must regularly revisit and review these five pedagogical approaches to ensure that relevant, quality, and liberating education will be within our learner's grasp.

The pandemic has turned the spotlight on one of the problems that the country has not been resolved until now: making education accessible to all under any circumstances. During this pandemic, the curriculum and the overall system of education were among the most affected by the crisis. The problems in sufficient classrooms, the student-teacher ratio, and the teaching resources were the problems encountered during pre-pandemic times, which can also be observed in this current situation.

Caught empty-handed, the common normal problem of every opening of classes was only a quarter of the future problem that the educational system would be facing. Even the most improved and developed educational system in the world was not spared by the problems brought on by the pandemic. The problem in the preparation of the opening of classes for the "new normal "can be viewed in the battleground, the basic unit of the educational system, "The school."

This study deals with the coping challenges experienced by the "front liners" on the delivery of education by "the teachers". Through this research, the readers and the administrators of the Department of Education will be enlightened about the actual and current situation that every public school teacher faces. Few researches have been done so far in relation to COVID-19 from the medical field and other fields related to health sciences (Abdulamir & Hafidh, 2020; Meng et al., 2020; Holshue et al., 2020). Likewise, very meager research was done in the field of education on how COVID-19 or even SARS affected the educational system (Bao, 2020; Sintema, 2020).

Encouraging students and other stakeholders to continue learning while stopping the virus's spread can be achieved by fortifying the university's health and educational plans. By taking such preventive steps, environmental hygiene can be improved, and the spread of infectious diseases can be reduced (Lee et al., 2003). Hence, this paper has been created to encourage other educational researchers to document and produce research evidence on how the present pandemic has changed the working of educational systems throughout the world. The proliferation of knowledge starts in the educational institutions. Consequently, the educational system, especially higher education, should prioritize literacy so that the world can adeptly deal with a future virus outbreak.

This research will contribute knowledge and awareness to school administrators, Department of Education officials, and the community regarding the problems of school teachers and make the "new normal "opening a successful one.

FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored on the Stress and Coping theory by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Biggs et al. (2017). The said theory suggested that the adaptive importance of a particular type of coping mechanism can be a function of the characteristics of the stressful encounter being considered. Additionally, it is a phenomenon that involves both cognitive and behavioral responses that an individual makes in an attempt to manage both internal and external stressors that exceed a subject's resources. In relation to this study, teachers coping with the "New Normal" also suffer from stress in preparation for the delivery of instructions to their students and are caught empty-handed and left with no resources to cope with the requirements of the Department of Education in the upcoming school opening in this extraordinary time.

The theory regarded the current situation of the public school teacher as proactive coping. Proactive coping is a set of processes through which people anticipate or detect potential stressors and act in advance to prevent them from harm or possible stress (Aspinwall, 2001; Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997). It is a blend of two extensively studied processes of coping and self-regulation. Coping is an activity undertaken to master, reduce, or tolerate environmental or intrapsychic demands perceived as threat, harm, or loss (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Self-regulation is the process by which people control, direct, and correct their actions as they move towards or away from different goals (Carver & Scheier, 1998).

In the domains of aging and work, the proactive coping concept has been used to examine situations in which people, rather than being passively shaped by their environments, respond to actual or potential environmental changes by gathering information about new environments and selecting and modifying environments to meet their needs. As these examples illustrate, proactive coping efforts may be applied to short-term, discrete situations or to developmental challenges and losses that the individual anticipated. In both cases, activities critical to understanding people's outcomes in educational, residential, and work settings occurred prior to or early in the course of some event or transition. They served to change their experience of the situation. This signal property of proactive coping is the possibility of changing or altering one; outcomes in potentially stressful situations were one of the principal distinctions between proactive coping and anticipatory coping. Anticipatory coping refers to efforts to brace oneself for the expected consequences of a known, imminent stressor. In proactive coping, the outcome of a situation may be unknown, and there is also room for one's actions to affect outcomes. Thus, proactive coping may involve a

wide range of processes involved in trying to understand and alter various future possibilities (Aspinwall, 1997; Gollwitzer & Bargh, 1996).

The COVID-19 pandemic has led teachers to an unpredictable scenario. A lockdown was implemented, which accelerated the shift from traditional to online or blended educational methods. The avoidance of direct contact with others has altered relationships, with implications for students' and even teachers' mental health.

This study focused on the ethnographic analysis of how teachers cope with the stress brought by the shift from the normal face-to-face modality of teaching to the so-called "new normal" delivery of education. To understand the actual experiences that teachers were going through during this pandemic time, the researcher assessed the lived experiences through specific objectives: first, to describe how teachers of Matnog Elementary School, Daraga North District, Daraga, Albay, responded to the challenges brought by the "New Normal" System of Education. The second is to determine how these challenges affect teachers in their professional, social, and psychological lives. The third is to identify other challenges encountered by the teachers in the preparation and delivery of education in times of pandemic. Lastly, the strategies of the teachers in coping with the challenges in the preparation and delivery of education in the "new normal" are evaluated. Also, the researcher conceptualized a solution through an action plan that was developed after the problems of the respondents were discovered in this research. The said action plan has three main key points: stress debriefing and counseling for all teachers, lack of "new normal" teaching resources, and lack of sufficient preparation in the delivery of education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to analyze the lived experiences of teachers in Matnog Elementary School, Daraga North District, Daraga, Albay, regarding the challenges they encountered in the delivery of instructions in the new normal. The following are the objectives of the study (1) describe how teachers of Matnog Elementary School, Daraga North District, Daraga, Albay respond to the challenges brought by the "New Normal" System of Education, (2) determine how these challenges affect teachers along with: a. Professional life; b. Social life; and c. Psychological life, (3) identify other challenges encountered in the preparation and delivery of education in times of pandemic, and (4) evaluate the teachers' strategies in coping with the challenges in the preparation and delivery of education in the "new normal".

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research utilized a qualitative ethnographic method that focused on the observation and analysis of the lived experiences of the participants in order to produce detailed and comprehensive accounts of social phenomena. The said method was the best at this time when exposure to a number of persons was prohibited under the health protocols set by the government. The different factors that affect the participants in coping with the call of the profession to effectively and successfully cater to the opening of classes in the post-pandemic. It also determined the impact of the said coping mechanism, especially in the preparation of the different requirements tasked to the teachers.

Ethnography is both a process and a product. In doing this, the researcher or the ethnographer actively participated in the group in order to gain an insider's perspective of the group and to have experiences similar to the group members. Since the researcher was also a member of the said target group of respondents, he gained and gathered accurate and credible first-hand data from the participants.

The respondents of the study were the teachers on the said study site. They were chosen because the researcher believed that they shared the same experiences as other teachers in public or private schools.

Research Site

The research was conducted in Matnog Elementary School. It is one of the schools under Daraga North District in the Municipality of Daraga, Albay. This place was selected for the efficiency of the study among teachers of the said school. Another reason was that the researcher was also a member of the particular school, and the respondents were familiar with him. That result was positive because of the confidence that existed between the researcher and the respondents. As a result, the most credible and valid turnouts were extracted from the key informants of the research.

Respondents

This research considered two sources of data: data from the results of the interview of the respondents and previous research from different literature and studies that are of immense help in the development of the research. The primary sources of this research were nine (9) basic education teachers of Matnog Elementary School, Daraga North District, Daraga, Albay. They were considered respondents because they could share their personal experiences needed for the study, and they were deemed knowledgeable and competent enough to provide

the necessary data. Furthermore, they were chosen because of the first-hand experiences they encountered in the preparation for the school opening, and they encountered the problem.

Instrumentation

An interview guide is composed of open-ended questions to avoid leading respondents and to gain as much information on the phenomenon as possible. The interview guide was reviewed by the adviser and guided by other qualitative researchers. These questions were answered by the teachers of Matnog Elementary School, Daraga North District, Daraga, Albay, who have actual experience with the phenomenon.

Sampling Technique

Ethnographic research is concerned with the study of culture or subcultures. This includes both the overt or explicit dimensions of culture that are known and cognitively salient to members of that culture or subculture. This research is dependent on the researcher's cultural immersion into the culture under investigation. In the case of this research, the faculty of the Matnog Elementary School, Daraga North District, Daraga, Albay, was identified as the subculture of the bigger population, which is the public school teachers in the Department of Education. The sampling was determined by the number of participants from the said study locale. Therefore, the total subculture group of the study site was utilized in order to get an accurate and credible result. All teachers in the site were taken as the respondents. Hence, no sampling was used.

Research Ethics Protocol

The following research ethics protocol was used in the study. The participants volunteered as part of the study and gave their consent to join the group. They were informed that all their responses would be treated with the utmost confidentiality and that the data would be used only for the research. The focus group discussion was conducted in a free and safe environment.

Data Gathering

After gathering data, the researcher consolidated all the interview results, which were analyzed using the eight (8) processes of ethnological research. After this, the researcher conducted and reviewed all the available literature to cross-reference the results. Also, the implication of each result was provided in order to

make the knock-on effect of every result of the study clear to the readers.

Data Analysis

In this study, the primary data came from the recorded one-on-one interviews with the respondents. The results of the interview or the so-called transcripts, were supported by secondary data from available resources like journals, theses, published research, and other printed and online materials. Such information was derived from local and foreign studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the study was based on the ethical procedure of ethnological research, which focuses on the eight step-by-step processes of the said research method. First, the researcher identified the research questions, followed by the identification of the location of the research or the Research Locale. Then, the formulation of the presentation method. The researcher chose to present the data thematically based on the four (4) objectives that the research committee has approved. Next, the researcher acquired permission and access from the head of the group, who conducted the observation and immersion. Right after the said process, the researcher immediately conducted the observation and participated in the activity of the focused group in order to determine the primary objective of the study, which is to examine and analyze the stressors experienced by the group in the delivery of education in the new normal. The correspondent noted all the running descriptions for the formulation of the thematic table so that the reader of this research could easily understand the impressions, feelings, and ideas that came after the transcript of the interview. In order to understand more about the said transcript, the interview was delivered to the respondents in order to support the documented observation of the interviewer. After the said process, the archival data were also considered to ensure that the triangulation of data was achieved or to ensure the validity and credibility of the data. Lastly, the coding and data analysis, or the last part of the eight (8) processes of ethnographic research, were presented in order to consolidate the overall process and to deliver the major goal of this research.

The thematic presentation of the data is followed by cross-referencing based on the literature review and the implication of every result in the entire process of the focused topic. Based on the transcript of ethnographic research, four (4) thematic titles were identified:

Theme 1: The Educators in the New Normal.

The Teachers' Responses to the Challenges Brought by the "New Normal" System of Education. This thematic result was the actual transcript of the interview through an open-ended interview conducted by the researcher.

> *"Ang mga stressors na nagdulot sa akin ng pangamba o pagkabalisa sa paghahanda sa bagong normal na sistema ng edukasyon ay ang pagiging exposed sa mga taong nakakasalamuha ko sa aking paligid (distribution and retrieval of modules). Ang pagtuturo sa pamamaraang modular ay isang pagsubok sa akin pati na rin sa mga magulang kung paano tuturuan ang mga bata lalo na ang nasa Kindergarten."*

In the article stated in ABConservation (2022), regarding the closure of schools, parents find themselves primarily responsible for the teaching of their children. They are forced to take over the task of home-schooling to maintain continuity of education. This becomes an added burden while they are already tackling issues such as work-from-home, temporary unemployment leading to financial crisis, and management of household chores. Many parents would not have adequate time or the necessary educational qualifications to assist their children with assignments that were previously taken care of by their teachers. This is likely to lead to frustration and burnout amongst caregivers and disruption in the academic activities of the children, leading to stress for both parents and children. Gender disparity regarding the allocation of household duties in such periods of confinement also needs to be focused upon, as women are often expected to devote more time to home-schooling children and doing household chores, affecting their academic careers.

> *One of the reasons that made me stressed in this new normal system of education is the fear of being exposed to the virus through the distribution and retrieval of modules.*

This personal account of one of the respondents was further supported by the other respondent as she stressed that:

> *"A stressor for me was the fear and worry of my health, my family's health, and at the same time the health of my pupils and their parents."*

Furthermore, another respondent gave her sentiment about being a senior citizen:

"First, senior citizen na ako, so nagkaroon ako ng pangamba kasi

bawal ang lumabas. Although lumalabas din ako, para sa mga necessities ko, nandun yung mga pangamba ko na baka mahawa ako ng covid. Kaya ibayong pag-iingat ang ginagawa ko. Nagkaroon pa ako ng pangamba doon sa maaaring kahihinatnan ng ating edukasyon kasi nga different platforms tayo. So ako naman bilang bahagi ng old generation, behind talaga ako dyan sa computer. Pero kahit ano pa man syempre gagawan ko ng paraan para ma-adopt ko yung pangyayari sa ngayon na may pandemic tayo ngayon o new normal education."

It is an obvious fact that being a senior citizen in this trying time suffered the most stress among other age brackets. An added burden is the use of technology to deliver the new platform of education. In one way or another, we were caught on the principle of "no choice" but to comply and adapt to the new normal system of education.

As cited in the study of Milian et al. (2020), research in China showed a mortality rate of 2.3% for the general population, which rose to 8% among those aged 70-79 years old and nearly 15% for those aged 80 and above. Another factor that triggered their stress or anxiety was the shift to the alternative modalities that are available in situations like this. After all, the utmost concern was the delivery of quality education among their students. Knowing where the students were coming from, especially those from incapable parents, to substitute the teachers in their own homes. The accounts below tell everything:

Anxiety to be exposed, "To be honest, nang ipinahayag na itutuloy ang klase ngayong taon ito maraming pangamba ang nasa isip ng bawat guro, isa na dito ay kung paano tuturuan ang mga mag-aaral, paano maibibigay sa kanila ang de- kalidad na edukasyon na walang face to face interaction. Sa mahabangpanahon kasi nasanay tayo na tinuturuan ang mga mag-aaral Sa pamamagitan ng face to face interaction kaya isang malaking hamon sa akin ngayon kung paano ito gawin, sa kabila nito may mga inilatag na iba't-ibang modalities ang DepEd na maaaring gamitin upang ipagpatuloy ang pag-aaral gayun pa man alinman sa mga modalities ang gamitin sa paaralan malaking hamon parin iyon sa mga mag-aaral, sa mga magulang at maging sa mga guro. Mahirap din sa part ng guro na hindi sila ang nagtuturo sa mga mag-aaral kundi ang kanilang mga magulang sapagkat hindi lahat ng magulang ay may kakayahan na turuan ang kanilang mga anak dahil minsan ay kailangan rin nila na maghanap-buhay para sa pamilya. Mahirap rin sa mga guro kung paano iaassess ang mga mag-

aaral nila dahil hindi naman nila direktang nakikita ang kakayahan ng kanilang mga mag-aaral. Minsan baka magkaroon ng bias o hindi fair ang paggrado sa kanila dahil hindi actual na nakita kung siya nga ba ang sumagot sa mga activities o aralin sa module. Kaya naman ang school year na ito ay talagang malaking challenge sa lahat."

According to Sayani et al. (2021), as the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and related hospital admissions continue to rise, so, too, does the risk of potential exposure. Supported by the study conducted by (Onyema et al., 2020), the new coronavirus spreads across the globe, and the chances that you will be exposed and get sick continue to increase. Assessment of the learning outcomes of the students was also noted as a stressor. As to how they are going to assess the performance of their students, this was supported by the other respondents:

"Ang isa sa mga stressors na nagdulot sa akin ng pangamba o pagkabalisa sa paghahanda sa bagong normal na Sistema ng edukasyon ay ang sitwasyon sa paraan ng pagtuturo. Dahil Sa ipinagbabawal nga ang face to face classes mahirap sa akin bilang isang guro kung paano ko masisiguro ang pagkatuto ng aking mga mag-aaral. Hindi katulad kapag kaharap mo ang mga bata mas madali mong matutugunan ang kanilang mga pangangailangan lalong lalo kung may mga katanungan sa aralin at may hindi sila nauunawaan." One of the worrisome stressors that I have encountered is the preparation for the new system of education and the modality. Due to the suspension of the usual delivery of learning, I personally experienced difficulty as to how the students will be assessed and ensure that they have learned the lesson. Unlike the normal system that we usually ask them if they understand the lesson or not.

Further, this was supported by the other respondent, who shared:

"Pag-iisip sa kung paano gawin ang distance learning. (How can we facilitate the pupils' learning? How do we assess their learning? How are we going to grade the pupils?)" I could only put one or two words for my stressor's sir with this quotation, "What if?" Triggered within me, as a result, focuses on the stressors in my life. So, many questions arise in my mind, and they all start with "What if?" What if the future will not be as clear as it was before? What if the future does not bring us flourishing or promising futures? I have put it in the connotation "what if?"

As cited in the study of Brummet (2014), the situation leaves many students in a negative spot where they are unable to receive education. The other concern of the teachers was presented below:

> *"Ito ang ilan sa mga stressors na nagdulot sa akin ng paghahanda sa bagong normal na sistema ng edukasyon." Working arrangement - Mayroong Work-from-Home at Skeleton Workforce. Nagtatrabaho kahit beyond working time/hours na minsan umaabot ng madaling araw. Pahirapan ang pagpunta ng sa paaralan. Halos walang bumabyahe sa lugar minsan kung kaya kailangan naming maglakad ng malayo hanggang sa may dumaang pampasaherong sasakyan. Karagdagan pa rito ang mataas na singil sa pamasahe; Kakulangan sa kagamitan sa paaralan na kailangan para sa modular distance learning. Kulang o halos walang suplay ng printer, ink at bond papers– lack of teaching resources to reproduce the teaching materials; mga tao sa komunidad, mga magulang/tagapag-alaga ng mga mag-aaral. Kinakailangan ang buong suporta ng komunidad at magulang para maging possible ang distance learning. Paano matutunan ng mga magulang ang kanilang mga anak kung halos lahat sa kanila ay naghahanapbuhay. Isa pa, ay kung paano nila maituturo ang leksyon kung sila ay pawang umabot lamang ng elementarya; Pabago-bagong polisiya na ipinaglalaban ng DEPED; Karagdagang gawain na ipinapataw sa mga kaguruan na halos sabay- sabay; Internet connection; Sapat na supply para sa magprint ng modules; Paano makontak ang mga mag-aaral na walang cellphone; Ang kaisipang "paano mo matutunan ng mga kaalaman ang mga bata", "ano ang magiging awtput nitong modality pagdating sa akademik na aspeto."*

As mentioned in the study of Mahapatra and Sharma (2021), while the majority of schools and colleges have transitioned to online delivery of classes and evaluation to avoid the disruption of educational services, the digital platform remains an uncharted area for the majority of the people in a low-middle income country. The transcript above was supported by the respondent below. They shared the same and varied experiences as to what they were going through in order to deliver education to the students.

> *"Ang mga stressors na nagdulot sa akin ng pangamba o pagkabalisa sa paghahanda sa bagong normal na sistema ng Edukasyon ay ang kakulangan ko ng mga kagamitan tulad ng kawalan ng mabilis na*

connection ng wifi, laptop at printer at iba pang gamit sa pagsisimula ng pasukan at sa paraan ng pagtuturo sa bagong normal na sistema ng Edukasyon. Kakulangan ng sapat na pera para sa pagbili ng mga produkto sa pamilihan dahil sa patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo nito,pahirapan sa transportasyon at mahahabang pila sa bawat lugar na pupuntahan."

Supported by the study on the use of the internet during a public health emergency, access to the internet becomes even more of an essential tool for protecting our health as well as a range of human rights, including our social and economic rights, while our everyday movements are restricted. A lack of access to the Internet significantly impacts people's lives during this time. The internet enables people to receive and share vital information about the pandemic and the measures being put in place to address it. It helps us to understand and scrutinize our governments' actions. With approximately 20% of the world's population socially distanced or living under quarantine conditions, technology helps us to work, shop, and communicate. A number of daily activities have shifted online, ranging from the provision of health services to education programs that enable homeschooling. Lack of adequate infrastructure or connectivity usually leaves behind the poorest communities, which shows the discriminatory effect of the digital divide (Dennis & Kahn, 2024).

Theme 2: The Effects of the "New Normal" on the Overall Process of Being a Teacher in Pandemic Time

This thematic result is divided into three sub-variables in terms of the professional, social, and psychological effects of the pandemic and the new normal modality of teaching to teachers.

According to respondent 1:
"In terms of professional well-being, it limits my ability to fully perform my passion in my chosen field of profession. Because face-to-face interaction or face-to-face execution professionally, is far away from that of modular which is I consider that it limits my ability to express myself fully."

This transcript was also supported by respondent two, who shared that her experience
that affected her professional being and tested by some circumstances, which are:

"As for my profession, there are parents who asked me to share part of my salary with them because they think that in this situation, teachers were not doing their jobs because we stayed at home working on things they do not know. For them, the teacher's job is to teach pupils, but since there are no pupils in school, they think we teachers are not working. Good enough, I was able to explain to them that we still have a lot of work to do in spite of this pandemic and the new normal situation."

My respondent 3 added that:

"Dahil sa pandemyang ito, feeling ko kulang ang binigay ko bilang Isang guro para sa aking mga mag-aaral. Kumbaga parang hindi ako Magiging epektibong guro ngayong taon. Nagkaroon din ng limitasyon sa pakikipag-ugnayan at pakikisalamuha, marami ang nagiging bawal at pagbabago na ibang iba sa kinasanayan noon na nagdulot talaga maski papaano ng depresyon. Upang malampasan ang mga ito, nag-isip o gumawa ako ng mga gawaing pinagkakaabalahan and at the same time makalilibang sa akin tulad ng pagtatanim ng halaman."

The professional career and passion of teachers were indeed tested in this trying time. An added burden is how to cope with the call or the mandate of being a professional teacher. It is known for the fact that teaching requires passion and unconditional dedication, for it is not a profit-based career but a personal sacrifice for the good of its clientele.

Respondent 2 further stressed that:

"As I said a while ago, sir, that this pandemic is my "what if '' in life. So, this "what if '' is driven by my psychological aspect. It deepens my understanding of how to re-evaluate my priorities in life. So, the psychological impact on me is that I need to reevaluate my priorities. What are the things that I really need to consider to be the most important thing in my life? Is it the material thing, or is it my family? Because at this pandemic time, we know that though we do have many things in life, our family is important. So, it re-evaluates my mentality on where I should focus." "For my social well-being, I know that it happens not only to me but true to all. It takes me to one place, and that is home. This results in my intimate interaction with my family. Though it limits our social interaction with others, it also deepens our social interaction with our family, which could be seen as intimate

relationships with one another. So, it strengthens the family building. Since it cannot be done physically, it also empowers us to utilize our technology. Though we do not physically interact with each other, we can still interact with them through social media, such as Messenger. So, though we are not interacting physically, the communication is still open, and the most wonderful thing is, before, we could only interact when we were physically present, but this time, it was just one text away."

These statements were also supported by Respondent 3 whose primary concern was the effective delivery of education:

"Pagdating sa trabaho, nakakabahala ang paglabas ng bahay o ang pagpunta sa paaralan, doble ang aking pag iingat lalo na sa mga nakakasalamuha ko. Pagdating naman sa mga online trainings at webinars na lubhang kailangan, ito ay magastos sapagkat kailangan ang magload palagi lalo na wala akong internet sa bahay. Kailangan kong may load palagi para updated ako sa anumang impormasyon na ibinahagi ng aking mga katrabaho. Sa mga modules naman, mahirap ang pagtuturo sa mga bata sapagkat ang mga modules ay may mga problema, malaboito at di nababasa." "Pagdating naman sa aspetong sosyal, tanging online na lang gaya ng facebook at messenger, pagtext at pagtawag sa cellphone ang aming pamamaraan ng komunikasyon." "Ang epekto naman sa sikolohikal na aspeto ay ang pagkabalisa o pag alala kapag may mga naririnig na masamang balita tungkol sa Covid-19. Dahil sa dulot ng krisis na ito, di natin maiiwasan ang mangamba at mag alala sa kaligtasan ng aking pamilya. Dahil din sa sunud sunod na bagyo na dumating, isa din ito sa mga nakakaapekto sa akin."

Another respondent stressed in her statement that:

"Bilang isang guro at itinuturing na may pinaka challenging na propesyon mahirap ang ganitong sitwasyon at masasabing isa ito sa pinakamalaking pagsubok sa ating sistema ng edukasyon ngayon. Sobrang hirap dahil sa pagsisimula palang ng klase, kailangan ng lumahok sa iba't-ibang webinar upang ihanda ang mga guro sa bagong normal na Sistema ng edukasyon, unang-una magastos sa pangload araw-araw ng pang-internet, kung sakali naman na may internet ang problema naman ay ang internet connection. Bawat webinar ay

kailangan ng mga outputs na kailangan rin magplano ng oras ng mga guro. Mahirap rin sa part ng guro ang paghahanda ng mga modules para sa mga mag-aaral dahil kailangan nilang magprint, magsort, maglagay ng bilit at pag-aayos nito sa kanya-kanyang envelope ng mga mag-aaral. Maliban sa paghahanda ng modules kailangan rin na maghanda ng karagdagang activity sheets bilang supplementary sa kanilang pag- aaral kaya masasabi kong halos nadoble o natriple ang trabaho ng mga guro kung ikukumpara sa regular na face to face. Sa kabila ng mga hamon na ito wara tayong magagawa kundi yakapin ang realidad at gumawa na lang ng paraan kung paano nakikiayon ditto, ika nga ng iba matatapos rin ito at babalik rin tayo sa normal."

Teachers at this time shared different sentiments and problems. However, one common concern was the effectiveness of the new standard system of education in achieving the sole goal of education, which is to give what is due to all learners. This was supported by the study conducted by Abel and McQueen (2020). The global COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted daily living, which was already challenging in many nations. The effects of shuttered schools and kids stranded at home with little to no access to education have proven disastrous for educators, students, and parents. According to experts, a full academic year may be lost, which would mean that an entire class of kids would be hopelessly behind in their studies.

Another respondent stressed her personal safety in this modality and said that:

"Dahil sa mga naranasan ko nakaramdam ako ng takot at pangamba lalong lalo na para sa aking sarili at pamilya." "Dahil sa sitwasyon napilitan tayong manatili sa loob ng ating mga bahay kaya nawalan tayo ng pagkakataon na makasama ang ating mga kapamilya at kaibigan. Hindi natin ginagawa yung mga bagay na nakasanayan nating gawain katulad ng pamamasyal o kaya pagpunta sa mall." "Naharap tayo sa isang malaking pagbabago sa paraan ng pagtuturo. Para tayong nagsimula sa umpisa. Maraming bagay na tungkol sa pagtuturo ang kinakailangan nating aralin at matutunan sa bagong sistema ng edukasyon na siyang nagdulot din sa atin ng anxiety. Dahil sa bagong sistema mas dumami pa ang ating naging trabaho. Mula sa pag print ng modyul, distribusyon, retrieval at pag chececk ng mga gawain."

Supported by another respondent:

"As to my experiences in this new normal setup in education, of course, it's really different from the normal schedules as I faced my pupils in four corners of the classroom, and the methods, approaches, and techniques in teaching were totally different. Before, there was a flag-raising ceremony, but now it is gone. Teachers had a break at noon, but now we serve our parents and learners 24/7 to respond to their queries, clarification, and information dissemination." *"The social aspect was really affected since I was not allowed to mingle with others and was subjected to ECQ, GCQ, and MGCQ for almost how many months. The great impact on my professional and psychosocial well-being was the stretched patience because I had to be patient with all my parents, especially those who seemed to be attention-seekers who repeatedly asked questions I already answered. Moreover, aside from that, to a doubting parent who seemed not to believe what you are telling or informing them."*

Supported further by another respondent:

"Exhausted sa trabaho. Kaliwa't kanan ang pinapagawa. Halos nauubos ang oras sa trabaho. Ang positibong epekto naman ay nagkaroon ng pagkakataong umattend ng mga webinars, online workshops at virtual meeting na nagbigay karagdagang kaalaman at kakayahan. Hindi namin agad-agad nakikitaang resulta ng pagkatuto ng mga bata. *"Limitahan ang pakikipag-salamuha ng harapan (face-to-face) sa ibang tao."* *"Minsan nakakaranas ng anxiety at insomnia. Nagiging irritable minsan."* On a positive note: a respondent said that *"mas lalo akong naging handa sa pagtuturo dahil sa panonood ko ng mga motivational videos at webinars. Nasasanay ko ang aking sarili sa paggamit ng mga bagong teknolohiya tulad ng laptop, cellphone at nagkaroon ng bagong kaalaman sa paraan ng iba't ibang modalities sa pagtuturo."* *"naging mas matatag ang pagsasamahan ng aking pamilya at sa trabaho.Na Iwasan ang mga luho sa buhay at nakapag- ipon para sa kailangan ng aking pamilya at trabaho. Hindi na masyadong nakaka-salamuha o nakakasama ang ibang kasamahan sa trabaho dahil sa bagong work arrangement, nawala ang mga malaki ang sosyal gatherings at all occasion/ celebration dahil sa pinapairal na mga protocol at maiwasan Ang mahawa ng sakit na dulot ng Coronavirus 2019. Gumagawa ng mga paraan kung paano makabili ng mga gamit tulad ng laptop atbp. para kasabay sa bagong normal na pagtuturo sa*

darating na pasukan.Madalas late matulog para maipasa ang mga required reports, mga modules at activity sheets,pagkuha ng update online and always keep on track."

The statements above show how stressful the experiences of the respondents of this research were and their impact on their professional, psychological, and social well-being. Students in basic education settings are recognized to encounter a wide range of continuous normative stresses due to their ongoing academic expectations, according to the research of Liu and Lu (2011). However, in the current situation brought about by the societal constraints imposed by the epidemic, students' levels of academic stress have escalated to extremely high levels. There has been enough evidence to show that severe and long-standing academic-related stress has an adverse effect on the academic performance, mental health, and well-being of children and adolescents.

The study by Liu (2015) explained that academic-related stress is significantly associated with reduced student motivation and academic disengagement. This makes them vulnerable to dropping out, future unemployment, and increased incidence of psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders (Pascoe et al., 2019). Long-standing stress exposure in children and adolescents may also lead to the development of some physical health problems, such as metabolic syndrome, obesity, and reduced insulin sensitivity, as well as a reduction in life expectancy (Pervanidou & Chrousos, 2012). Recent graduates in India are fearing the withdrawal of job offers from corporations because of the current situation. The Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy's estimates on unemployment shot up to 23% in early April, and the urban unemployment rate to 30.9% (Chaudhary, 2020).

Theme 3: Other Challenges Confronting the "New Normal" Delivery of Education

"Actually, If I were talking about challenges, I could say that, materially, for example, internet connection, poor electricity in our surroundings, poor materials, those are the things that can be considered as challenges or problems because we are not rich enough to be able to provide these things. However, the deeper challenge that we could have or experience is the cloudy future, which means the uncertainty of what will happen in the future. What would life bring us that is full of what if? So that is my most challenging part during this pandemic, sir, particularly in the field of education. What future would our learners have? Would it be a brighter one? Or would it be what I have written here, a cloudy

future?"

Supported by the statement of respondent no. 4:

"Isa pa sa problema na kinakaharap ngayon ay availability ng mga self-learning modules, hanggang ngayon kasi ay hindi ba naibibigay ito sa mga paaralan upang maibigay narin sa mga mag-aaral. Ang iba rin dito ay kulang ang mga number of copies kaya ang mga guro ay kailangan paring magprint ng mga karagdagang modules upang mabigyan ang lahat ng mga mag-aaral, kaso paano kung kulang sa mga supply na gagamitin. Kaya minsan nakakahiya man kailangan mag solicit ni teacher upang magkaroon ng supply na gagamitin para sa mga modules. Kapagnaprint naman ang mga modules, problema na naman minsan ito'y malabo o hindi naiintindihan ang mga larawan o kailangang black in white upang makatipid sa ink sa pag print. Dahil dito maraming magulang ang nagtatanong, nagcocomment o may mga queries kung bakit ganoon ang modules kaya si teacher dapat laging available ang cellphone o kung maaari ay online siya upang masagot ang mga tanong o concerns ng mga magulang."

Respondent No. 5 further stressed:

"Kung may mga problema sila sa module o sa pagtuturo paano ko sila matutulungan? Karamihan sa kanila malayo ang bahay sa paaralan. Ang iba kasing mga magulang ay namomroblema sapagkat di daw nila kayang turuan ang kanilang mga anak sapagkat sila'y naghahanap buhay."

Further supported by Respondent No. 7:

Ang mga problema na naranasan ko sa paghahanda sa darating na pasukan ay kakulangan ng gamit at mga nabasang modules dahil sa kalamidad na dumating sa ating lugar.

Respondent No. 8 stated:

"Problema pa natin, di natin malalaman kung talagang mga bata ang sumasagot ng mga modules o kaya yung parents, di ba, andiyan na yan parati. Talagang may mangyayaring ganyan." All of these were the usual problems that a teacher experienced even in normal and common teaching modality.

Respondent No. 1 stressed:
> *"Kakulangan sa mga kagamitan dahil sa limitadong budget. Limitadong bilang ng printer, kulang ang ink at coupon bonds."*

Supported by Respondent No. 2,
> *"Madalang na dating ng modules kung kaya't nagkakaroon ng lag sa pag-aaral ng mga bata."*

Aside from those problems mentioned above, respondents 5, 8, and 9 shared the same issues regarding the new normal teaching modality:

> *"Isang malaking hamon sa akin kung paano ko ipa follow up ang bata, may mga ilan sa mga magulang ay walang cellphone na maari sanang gamitin bilang komunikasyon. Isa na diyan yung communication ko sa mga parents. Yan sabi ko baga sa iyo as a senior citizen, hindi madalas na pumunta sa school.Komunikasyon sa mga magulang dahil may ilan sa mga magulang na wala namang gadget na pwedeng gamitin.*

Theme 4: Teachers' Strategies for Coping with the Challenges in the "New Normal"

The following statements were the actual transcripts from the respondents' first-hand answers extracted from the interview. Consolidated and presented by the researcher into the following theme:

> *"Maging positibo ang pananaw at isiping babalik na sa normal ang lahat.Kinakamusta ko ang mga magulang at mga bata nang sa gayon matutunan ng pansin ang kanilang mga pangangailangan sa pagtuturo sa kanilang mga anak. Sa mga may cellphone, hinihikayat ko ang mga magulang na ipasa nila ang kanilang mga ginagawa gaya ng picture o video ng mga bata sa messenger o group chat. Sa pamamagitan nito, nahihikayat o nagaganyak ang ibang mga magulang na pagbutihin pa ang kanilang pagtuturo sa kanilang mga anak. Tinutulungan ko rin ang mga magulang ng ibang paraan kung paano nila tuturuan ang kanilang mga anak nang di nahihirapan o napipilitan ang bata."*

Supported by the respondent which has the same statement:
> *"Ang pinakamaganda na lang na magagawa natin bilang isang guro ay maging matatag tayo, nga. Then, learn to accept the challenges and willing to learn. Accepting the fact, I'm no a perfect naman, diba*

di naman tayo perpekto. Then, bilang isang guro bahagi ng ating sinumpaang trabaho ang pagsubok na ito. Malalampasan naman siguro natin ito."

Further supported by respondent no. 3:

"*Siguro ang pinakamaganda nalang na magagawa natin dito ay maging resilient, resourceful, creative at positive outlook in life. Bilang isang guro, bahagi na ng ating trabaho ang pagsubok na ito ang magagawa lang natin kung paano gagawing positibo ang lahat ng mga pagsubok na ito. Siguro anuman ang natutunan natin sa mga webinar o lac session na dinaluhan natin iaaplay ito sa ating mga mag-aaral piliin kung alin ang naayon sa kanila at maging creative upang maging kawili-wili sa mga mag-aaral ang pagsagot sa mga modules at hindi nila isiping burden ito sa kanila at palagiang imonitor ang mga mag-aaral sa pamamagitan ng anumang paraan (call, text o video call)upang nasubaybayan parin ang kanilang progress sa pag-aaral at siempre pag guide din sa mga magulang upang maturuan ng maayos ang mga mag-aaral dahil sila ang nakakatulong natin ngayon sa ikabubuti at ikauunlad ng pag-aaral ng mga bata.*

Supported by respondent no. 6, which stressed that:

"*Being optimistic, Maglaan ng oras para makapaglibang, Masayang usapan ng mga katrabaho at kaibigan Suporta ng pamilya at kapwa-guro." Finally, respondent number 9 said: "As I've said, family members, friends, co-teachers, and colleagues helped me to adjust and be able to cope with stressors I encountered in preparation and delivery of the new normal system. Webinars also helped me to gain insights and knowledge on how to cope with this present situation."*

All of the responses of the respondents on the above transcripts show the support of their family peers, knowledge advancement provided by the Department of Education, and finally, the optimistic principle of each teacher who has the heart and complete dedication to what they are doing. Other respondents showed personal attachments to understand what the learners were coming through. The following were the statements:

"For me to be able to come up with a good strategy, sir, I need to put myself in the place of my clientele, who is my learner. And from that, I meditate on what I need if I am the learner and what is a must for

me if I am the one in their shoes. In doing so, I must be able to come up with the solution that I know that is suited to my learners. So, the best way for me to know what they need is for me to be in their place.”

Supported by respondent No. 5, which says that:
“Ang madalas na pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga magulang sa tulong ng iba’t ibang means of communication katulad ng paggamit ng facebook, messenger, pagtawag sa kanila o kaya pag txt lalo na kung may mga katanungan sila tungkol sa aralin.” “Pakikipag-ugnayan sa barangay para sa assistance na kailangan ng mga bata at magulang. At sa pag distribute at pag retrieve ng mga modules.”

There were other responses that pertain to the solutions they have done with regard to the problems with resources:
“Ang naisip kong solusyon para malampasan ang mga stressors na naranasan ko ay nanghiram ng gamit sa kamag-anak para makasabay sa mga gagawin online at sa trabaho dahil sa baguhan sa service at na permanent palang ako sa Department hindi sapat ang makabili ng mga kagamitan tulad ng laptop,cellphone, prepaid WiFi at printer .Pa unti unti nakapagpa install na rin ako ng postpaid WiFi connection sa aming bahay Kapag nasa paaralan ako naglo load rin po ako ng mobile data para nasubaybayan ko ang aming group chat messaging at mga updates sa trabaho.” “Iyong sa stressors na nabanggit ko kanina tungkol sa internet connection, sa totoo lang since wala akong budget sa pagpa-install ng internet, ang ginawa ko na lang ay bumili ako ng pocket wifi na pasok sa aking budgetpara naman maski papaano makasabay sa online na kinakailangan para sa ating mga guro.”

Coping with the different challenges that the respondents have encountered is almost a boundless effort that a teacher has done in order to make it possible and to cater to the needs of the learners.

Limitations of the Study
The study's concentration on Albay, Philippines poses a limitation that could limit the applicability of its findings to other areas or educational contexts. Furthermore, the study mostly uses qualitative data from a small sample size of respondents, which might not fully represent the range of difficulties and experiences seen by all educators during the epidemic. Moreover, the retrospective aspect of the study may include biases in the recollections of the participants

on their experiences, which could potentially alter the accuracy of the problems and coping techniques reported. Last but not least, given how the pandemic is changing and how it continues to affect schooling, the results might not last long until new problems and solutions are discovered.

CONCLUSIONS

The respondents met various challenges along with exposure to the virus and the health of their families, results of their student's learning, the quality of education, giving grades to students, multiplication, delivery, and retrieval of the modules, and their adjustments to the situation. The experiences of the teachers affected their personal, social, and psychological lives. There were more effects on their professional life, followed by their psychological and social life. The teachers were confronted with other challenges in the "New Normal" delivery of education, such as additional expenses for the cellphone load and internet connection, late submission of outputs, delayed supply of modules, and communication to parents. The teachers have utilized their creativity and resourcefulness in modifying their teaching strategies to cope with the challenges of delivering education in the "New Normal." Parents were forced to participate in home-schooling to maintain continuity of learning.

This study offers important insights into the lived experiences of teachers in Albay during the epidemic, revealing their unique coping mechanisms and adaptive methods that can guide future educational practices and policies in comparable situations.

The study has generated new knowledge contribution to the field of education by emphasizing the unique difficulties and coping mechanisms faced by educators during the pandemic, this study advances policy development by offering evidence-based suggestions for developing supportive educational policies that cater to the needs of teachers in comparable crisis scenarios.

In order to improve our understanding of educational dynamics in crisis situations, future research should concentrate on longitudinal studies to evaluate the pandemic's long-term effects on teachers, comparative studies across different regions to identify different experiences and strategies, and investigations into the impact of these challenges on student learning outcomes.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The study makes numerous recommendations for useful translational research projects to share findings and increase public awareness of the difficulties faced by educators during the epidemic. These projects include making educational materials that are indigenous, putting on dramatizations and one-act plays to involve the community, using media campaigns to reach a wider audience, planning teacher workshops to exchange best practices, and holding community meetings with parents and members to promote cooperation. By working together, these initiatives hope to close the knowledge gap between research findings and useful implementations, improving crisis support and teaching strategies in the process.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, that could influence or bias the content of this article. This study was conducted independently without any external funding from organizations or individuals that could have a vested interest in the findings.

The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon request to ensure transparency and facilitate independent verification of the results. AI was utilized ethically solely to enhance readability, with due diligence and mindfulness applied to ensure that it did not contribute to the analysis or interpretation of the content.

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