

Public Elementary School Teachers in Mamplasan: A Phenomenological Investigation One Year After the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract:

The goal of this phenomenological research is to look at the lives of public elementary school teachers one year after the Covid-outbreak. The lived experience of a person is a representation of their experiences and decisions, as well as the knowledge obtained as a result of these experiences and decisions. It can also refer to a sort of qualitative research that covers cultural and social studies, as well as linguistics and communication. Data was collected by interviewing eight instructors at a school in the Philippines. A semi-structured interview was conducted to gather information from respondents. In this study, IPA, or Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, is utilized to understand teachers' lived experiences a year after the epidemic.

KEYWORDS: Phenomenology, challenges, coping mechanisms, experiences

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in March 2020, the coronavirus, often known as Covid 19, causes a serious respiratory infection. The teaching-learning process in school is impacted by the coronavirus's extensive distribution. As a result, people turn to other platforms instead of learning (Moralista and Oducado, 2020)

To better meet the requirements of their students, public elementary school teachers have turned to blended learning and modalities. In this uncertain time, the teacher was required to: (i) live diverse experiences; (ii) face distinct obstacles in a new learning environment; and (iii) build various coping mechanisms to deal with the pandemic-related problems.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers after a year of a pandemic?
2. What are the challenges that primary public elementary school teachers encountered in adapting to the new normal in education during the pandemic?
3. In what ways did public elementary school teachers adapt to the education system changes caused by the pandemic?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Despite the obstacles they face, public elementary school teachers exhibit remarkable resilience in their approach to teaching and learning. The Covid-19 crisis has presented educators with a range of new challenges, as well as opportunities to hone their skills and explore innovative teaching strategies. Recent research by Helen Boholano and Bernard Jamon (2021) suggests that teachers have been able to transform perceived weaknesses into teachable moments, using creative methods to deliver effective lessons during this difficult time.

Annamalai, Rashi, Saed, AL - Smadi, and Yassi (2022) assert that providing educators with additional time to test and refine their teaching methods can enhance their ability to deliver instruction.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, phenomenological research was performed, which is a qualitative method that seeks to capture and identify the universal essence of an experience. The method addresses people's everyday experiences while overturning researchers' preconceived notions about the phenomenon.

Utilizing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the current investigation delved into the participants' handling of their individual and societal encounters by thoroughly investigating their life experiences. (Smith and Osborn, M. 2008)

The primary objective of this investigation is to present the personal encounters of educators working in public education. The focus is on the fundamental nature of these experiences. Proper interpretation of the interview responses (following the philosophical approach of Heidegger) is crucial.

Participants

Eight Elementary School Teachers from a public school in Laguna have agreed to partake in this study by answering an interview. The participants range from kindergarten to 6th-grade teachers and are spread out among the school.

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	TOTAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE	Grade Level taught	CURRENT POSITION
Participant 1	male	28	married	10	Grade 2	T - I
Participant 2	female	45	married	15	Grade 1	T - II
Participant 3	female	27	single	5	Grade 5	T - I
Participant 4	female	32	married	10	Grade 6	T - II
Participant 5	male	31	single	5	Grade 4	T - I
Participant 6	female	45	married	15	Kinder	T - I
Participant 7	male	25	single	5	Grade 6	T - I
Participant 8	male	32	single	6	Grade 3	T - I

Instrument

The research employed a semi-structured interview format that relies on the recollections and contemplation of participants to guide them through their experiences (Crotty, 1998). The interview consists of three questions, aimed at capturing their lived experiences, hardships, and means of managing them, that have been designed to demonstrate their credibility. Building a relationship is essential for the interviewer to gain the trust of the respondents, and all reactions were recorded as they were given.

Procedures

Establishing a rapport between the interviewer or researcher and the interviewees is highly beneficial. This builds trust and can result in stronger responses. Equally important is scheduling an interview with enough time for participants to thoughtfully consider the questions posed by the interviewer.

In order to ensure the accuracy of data collection, it is essential for participants to answer the three questions with the utmost integrity. Additionally, participants were advised to request further explanation if required. The researcher conducted a one-on-one interview with each participant, recording their responses verbatim. This approach was adopted to guarantee precision in data collection.

Results

After analyzing the gathered data from the interview, certain themes were identified as a result. These themes will be discussed in the following sections.

- ✓ Real-life experiences/ lived experiences
- ✓ Struggles/ challenges
- ✓ How they dealt with it/ coping mechanisms

Lived Experiences

Table 1.1 Interpretation of Diff. Lived Experiences

Real-life experiences	Frequency
Adjustment	5
Difficult / Hardest part of life	4
Mental Health condition	3
Too many tasks/paperwork	2

According to the participants, one of the remarkable experiences after a year of a pandemic is the adjustment period followed by mental health conditions towards the situation and too many tasks/paperwork.

Table 1.1.1 Real-life experiences

Participants	Verbal Transcription	Coding
Participant 1	<i>For me being a public teacher after a pandemic is the hardest part in terms of adjustment to the new setup of education and to your pupils most of them cannot read and write properly.</i>	<i>Adjustment and Difficulty</i>
Participant 2	<i>I experienced a lot of adjustments since we were not well-equipped when the pandemic came.</i>	<i>Adjustments</i>
Participant 3	<i>I have had to adjust quickly to online or hybrid teaching models, which require new technology skills and strategies for engaging students remotely.</i>	<i>Adjustments</i>
Participant 4	<i>There are so many adjustments to do because of the safety measurement inside the classroom</i>	<i>Adjustments</i>
Participant 5	<i>After a year of the pandemic, it is difficult for us public elementary school teachers to regain the momentum of our teaching like before the pandemic.</i>	<i>Difficulty</i>
Participant 6	<i>Personally, the Pandemic is a threat to me as a teacher. It took me a long adjustment how to cope with the new normal. This pandemic gave us a great challenge to us teachers to what we can do through the delivery of learning changes.</i>	<i>Adjustments</i>
Participant 7	<i>My experiences as a public elementary school teacher after a year of the pandemic have been the implementation and evaluation of learning, and collaboration with parents.</i>	<i>Difficulty</i>
Participant 8	<i>I had trouble handling things at the same time. How do I teach without children? I had difficulties in reproducing materials, and preparing audio-video learning and I had to go to school despite the spread of the coronavirus.</i>	<i>Difficulty</i>

After a year of the pandemic, it is difficult for public elementary school teachers to regain the momentum of their teaching like before the pandemic.

Table 1.1.2 Real-life experiences

Participants	Verbal Transcription	Coding
Participant 1	<i>I encountered stress, anxiety, fear, sadness, rumors, and misinformation that make my life out of control and make it unclear what to do.</i>	<i>Mental Health condition</i>
Participant 2	<i>I feel overwhelmed and stressed, as they balance the demands of teaching, their own safety concerns, and the needs of their students.</i>	<i>Mental Health condition</i>
Participant 3	<i>As a Grade 1 teacher, the worst problem I experienced after a year of the Pandemic was the behavior of the pupils and it made me feel sorry. I am sad and worried and stressed about how to help my students.</i>	<i>Mental Health condition</i>
Participant 4	<i>In addition of too many papers works and projects to implement so that pupils can catch up on their learning loss.</i>	<i>Too many tasks/paperwork</i>
Participant 5	<i>I also experienced a time in my life when I cannot accomplish the required task in a given time because it is too many.</i>	<i>Too many tasks/paperwork</i>

Lindner, K., Savolainen, H., and Schwab, S. conducted a study. (2021), argues that addressing teachers' emotional experiences is crucial to prevent long-term harm to people (teachers, students, and institutions) (schools, education system)

1. Challenges

Table 2.1 Interpretation of Diff. Challenges/struggles

Challenges	Frequency
<i>ICT concern</i>	5
<i>New normal setup</i>	4
<i>The difficulty of learners following instructions</i>	2
<i>Training and seminars for teachers</i>	2
<i>Health Issues</i>	1
<i>Lack of resources</i>	1
<i>Too many paper works</i>	1
<i>Interconnectedness</i>	1

The result shows that different challenges encountered by public elementary teachers a year after the pandemic are a Lack of cooperation from colleagues, parents, and learners, health issues, and ICT concerns. Here are some of their responses.

Table 2.1 .1 Challenges/struggles

Participants	Verbal Transcription	Coding
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Participant 1	<i>There are too many challenges I encountered in a new normal during a pandemic. First parents are the ones who answer modules of their child. Second, some of my parents are not cooperative in the distribution and retrieval of modules. Third is the worst thing that even teachers get sick after they distribute and retrieve their modules, but despite challenges, there are opportunities to help you to cope with the challenges that we experience the free training and seminars giving tips and ideas to solve problems</i>	<i>Health Issues</i> <i>Trainings for teachers</i>
Participant 2	<i>Faced several difficulties using technology such as the internet, radio, videos, and other means. Various platforms like Google Meet and Zoom became handy. Nevertheless, many of these tools were new to teachers and students. In terms of learning quality transfer, module distribution and retrieval, students' difficulties in following instructions, internet connection, and health risks posed by the pandemic.</i>	<i>Difficulty in following instructions</i> <i>ICT concerns</i>
Participant 3	<i>Teachers have reported feeling overwhelmed and stressed, as they balance the demands of teaching, their own safety concerns, and the needs of their students. Teachers have reported a lack of resources and support for online or hybrid teaching, including limited access to technology or training.</i>	<i>Lack of resources</i> <i>ICT concerns</i>
Participant 4	<i>The challenges that I encountered in new normal education during the pandemic are the following:</i> <i>a. Bulking paper works.</i> <i>b. Hard time coping with deadlines.</i> <i>c. Many preparations for the learning materials.</i> <i>d. Information/instruction dissemination.</i> <i>e. Communication with the parents and learners.</i> <i>f. New classroom set up.</i> <i>g. New classroom rules and restrictions.</i>	<i>Too many tasks/paperwork</i> <i>Difficulty in following instructions</i> <i>New normal</i>
Participant 5	<i>The learners are greatly affected by the pandemic because most learners find it difficult to participate in face-to-face classes after the pandemic. The teachers and learners undergo mental health seminars and activities for them to be ready and be at ease once again inside the classroom. It became challenging for the teachers how to deliver the lesson as well as be mindful of the learner's behavior and willingness to learn. It is hard at first but since everything is coming back to normal it became easier.</i>	<i>New normal</i> <i>Training for teachers</i>

Participant 6	<i>Some of the challenges that I have encountered in adapting to the New Normal are the following:</i> <i>Low knowledge of digital instruction.</i> <i>Independent Learning of young pupils is not easy and undetermined.</i> <i>Implementing discipline with the pupils is not easy because they are not used to classroom set-up.</i>	ICT concerns
Participant 7	<i>There were a lot of challenges on my part that I encountered on how to adapt to the new normal; first is how to ensure that both learners and teachers are connected even not in the 4 corners of classroom, second is internet connection, not all learners and parents have a mobile gadgets and internet all the time. Third is how to secure the safety of teachers since we were required to duty at school even once just to deliver the learning materials of learners. And lastly, the quality education that we teachers can provide to learners. Based on my experience, there are some of my learners that they were passing their answer sheet even they are not answering it. On the other hand, there were also opportunities that were given to teachers in the new normal, one of that is , they were free from stress. Second, it gave them time to be with their families. Next, they can have an extra job if they want because they have enough time. And lastly, I think this new normal was a bonus for teachers to enjoy with their family even if they are underpaid. Having time with their families is what they deserved.</i>	<i>New normal</i> <i>ICT concerns</i> <i>Interconnectedness</i>
Participant 8	<i>Using technology, such as the internet, videos, a limited number of face-to-face encounters, as well as other means, I was able to adjust to what had become the norm in education during the pandemic. This presented both obstacles and opportunities. The Department of Education's lectures made use of resources such as Google Courses and Google Meet.</i>	<i>ICT concern</i> <i>New normal</i>

According to Fauzi et al. (2020) teachers face problems such as lack of opportunities, network and internet use, learning planning, implementation and evaluation, and collaboration with parents during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Coping Mechanism

Table 3.1 Interpretation of Diff. Coping Mechanism

Coping Mechanism	Frequency
Adaptability	6
Flexibility	4
Innovative and Creative	2
Collaborative	2

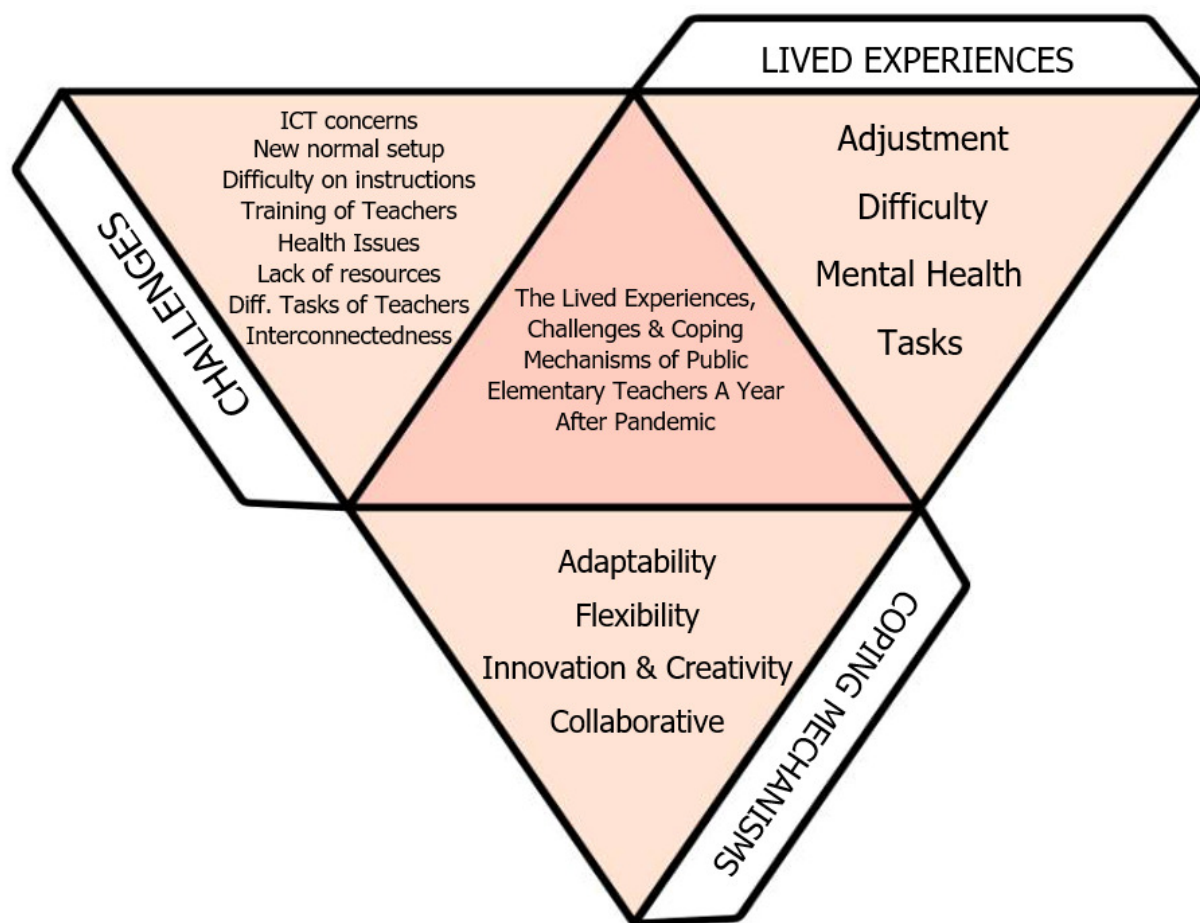
This theme shows the coping mechanisms of teachers a year after the pandemic. Coping is defined as the thoughts and behaviors used to manage internal and external stressful situations. Adaptability, Flexibility, Innovation, creativity, and collaboration are their armor for the new setup of delivering education to learners. Here are the responses of the participants.

Table 3.1.1 Coping Mechanism/ How to dealt with it

Participants	Verbal Transcription	Coding
Participant 1	<i>They said that "Being a teacher is not a profession but it is a passion" regards to the changes in the education system. I / We must be innovative and adapt whatever changes that can help my pupils to learn</i>	Adaptability Innovative and Creative
Participant 2	<i>I need to adapt practices and be creative to keep my students engaged as every household became a classroom. I provided weekly paper-based resources to my students and meet their parents weekly for retrieval day. And issued new worksheets/ answer sheets for the week ahead.</i>	Adaptability
Participant 3	<i>I rely on peer support and collaboration, through online platforms or in-person meetings.</i> <i>I developed new strategies for engaging students remotely, such as using breakout rooms for small group discussions or using online resources to supplement lesson plans.</i> <i>I found ways to prioritize my own self-care and well-being, such as taking breaks throughout the day or participating in virtual exercise classes.</i>	Flexibility Collaborative
Participant 4	<i>Many teachers have reported relying on peer support and collaboration, through online platforms or in-person meetings.</i> <i>Teachers have developed new strategies for engaging students remotely, such as using breakout rooms for small group discussions or using online resources to supplement lesson plans.</i> <i>Teachers have found ways to prioritize their own self-care and well-being, such as taking breaks throughout the day or participating in virtual exercise classes.</i>	Adaptability Flexibility Collaborative
Participant 5	<i>As a public elementary school teacher, I went under different seminars and training to cope with the changes brought about by the pandemic. Through these seminars and training, we can adapt to the changes and were able to continue the teaching and learning process among the learners.</i>	Adaptability

Participant 6	<i>I have learned how to be adaptable and resilient about the change in the delivery mode of educational system.</i>	Adaptability Flexibility
Participant 7	<i>As a public school teacher, my main goal is to continue the ensure the continuous learning of my learners. When MDL was implemented, honestly, I was in the middle of predicament of because I am not 100% well-equipped when the pandemic came. With the help of this modality, it was a hard yet a challenge how to adjust in the new normal. This learning delivery modality is a form of individualized instruction that allows learners to use self-learning modules. It is inflexible both teachers and learners. I am blessed because there was a lot of training was being conducted which regarding on how to connect with the learners specifically different kinds of apps and their uses. Through this, it was not hard for me since I was given a chance to learn this kind of stuffs.</i>	Individualized learning Instruction Innovation and Creativity Flexibility
Participant 8	<i>The COVID-19 pandemic is an opportunity to impart learning with everyone and a stress test for educational systems. So, I establish my vision to adjust to the new standard of education, by reaching my objective.</i>	Adaptability

FRAMEWORK AND DISCUSSION



Phenomenology has grown from a methodological framework into a process that seeks the truth in people's tales about their lived encounters with things (Cilesiz, 2009: 70 Husserl: 1994 by Moustakas). The framework described above depicts the lived experiences of public elementary teachers. This framework depicts deductive approach or an inverted pyramid divided into three experiences of Public Elementary teachers one year after the outbreak. Based on the coding method, the greatest area of each pyramid represents the highest frequency of answers from interview participants.

The first pyramid depicts the public elementary teacher's most lived experiences. When it comes to the lived experiences of public elementary teachers, the adjustment period receives more responses. They went through significant changes in all aspects of the teaching profession. Difficulties arise a year after the pandemic as a result of anxiety, stress, and other mental health conditions. Furthermore, too many tasks or paperwork adds to the burden of public elementary teachers' lived experiences a year after the pandemic.

The second pyramid reveals that a year after the coronavirus spread, public elementary school teachers identified various challenges. The order of interpretation of participant responses, ICT concerns, the new normal setup, the difficulty of learners following instructions, a lack of teacher training, health issues, a lack of resources, too much paperwork, and interconnectedness are a few examples.

The third pyramid depicts the coping mechanisms of public elementary school teachers confronted with the challenges of a new way of delivering education. Adaptability was the most important factor in these teachers' ability to overcome challenges, followed by various skills such as flexibility, innovation, collaboration, and creativity. These coping mechanisms alleviate the suffering of public elementary school teachers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study, Public Elementary Teachers experienced intricate difficulties a year after the pandemic. They had to make adjustments in order to take their part and give their best despite the spread of coronavirus. Many of them have experienced mental health conditions on how to handle the situation given the fact that there are countless papers works to accomplish

A year after the pandemic, public elementary teachers faced unimaginable challenges, according to this study. The first is a lack of cooperation, a failure to follow instructions, and a need for interconnectedness from parents, students, and even colleagues. The fact that they had to report to school and follow protocols despite the spread of coronavirus a year after the pandemic hit is also a major concern. A new normal setup, as well as a lack of training and resources, are among the challenges. Finally, new and seasonal public elementary teachers needed to be ICT literate in order to adapt to changes in delivering quality education a year after the pandemic.

Public elementary teachers faced a variety of challenges during this period of their careers. Instead of viewing it as a setback, they see it as an opportunity. One of the keys to overcoming challenges in the midst of the pandemic is adaptability. They also improve their flexibility, innovation, collaboration, and creativity skills in order to overcome various challenges.

This demonstrates that, despite numerous challenges, public elementary teachers will not give up on their chosen passion and career. A year after the pandemic, these challenges made public elementary teachers more resilient.

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