

Testing Resilience: Secondary School Teachers' First-Hand Experiences on the Full Implementation of Face-to-Face Classes

Yvonne Estrada Billones
Department of Education
Cogon National High School

Abstract:- This study explored the lived experiences, challenges encountered, coping mechanisms, and insights of public secondary school teachers on the full implementation of face-to-face classes in schools. The participants were coming from Cogon National High School of the Island Garden City of Samal Division (IGACOS), Region XI. There were eight teachers who participated in the study. This study made use of a phenomenological approach to extract the ideas from the participants. The participants were purposely selected as representatives from the group of secondary school teachers who are assigned in the same school. The virtual in-depth interview was employed to gather significant information with regard to their respective lived experiences. Using the thematic analysis, the following themes emerged pertaining to their lived experiences: focusing on learners' interpersonal skills, teaching with limitations, and hurdling work fatigues. There were three sub-themes that emerged from the challenges encountered or work fatigue by the participants. These are heavy additional workloads, interactions hindered by protocols, and obvious learning gaps. The two coping mechanisms of teachers as participants in the challenges they experienced were creating recovery programs and professional development training for teachers in the new normal. The two educational management insights drawn from the participants were adherence to safety protocols and the importance of blended learning. Thus, Division officials, District Supervisors, School administrators and heads may encourage and support their teachers by reviewing their workloads and by supporting their efforts to address learning gaps in schools. They may also implement a comprehensive program or capacity building and professional development to help teachers to be effective and efficient in the full implementation of face-to-face classes and alternative modalities in schools.

Keywords:- Face-To-Face Classes, Full Implementation, Lived Experiences, Secondary.

I. INTRODUCTION

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the areas that suffered was education. The UNICEF, which continues to advocate for the resumption of in-person classes in various countries, stated in an article that in 2020, while schools globally were forced to suspend operations for an average of 79 days, schools in the Philippines opted for online and distant learning modalities for more than a year. Bisnar (2022) mentioned in a news editorial that the indefinite suspension of classes and the accompanying sudden change to new forms of learning modalities presented a number of obstacles, particularly for vulnerable students, including unequal access to electronic devices and online resources. This was another blow to a nation that was already trying to improve the quality of basic education before the outbreak. Just recently, the DepEd has formally reopened schools for face-to-face classes, two years after the government instituted lockdowns and stringent safety measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The responses of teachers were fairly diverse. Some praised the reinstatement of in-person classes, while others expressed concern and worries about it.

Recent reports on the reintroduction of face-to-face classes for the 2022-2023 school year have created enthusiasm, but the reappearance of COVID-19 cases has sparked concern. It is a well-known truth that the fundamental goals of schools are to instruct children to study and learn; hence, teachers are accountable for affecting students' academic performance. Now that the distant arrangement will no longer be an impediment to learning, some teachers and students feel extra pressure to perform well in a face-to-face environment. It is hoped that school officials will not place undue demands on students, instructors, and staff, given that everyone's physical, mental, and psychological health has suffered from two years of distance learning and classes.

Globally, the state of emergency declared in Japan for the first time on April 7, 2020, was lifted on May 25, 2020. As of June 1, 2020, the majority of temporarily closed schools in Japan have reopened. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has not yet subsided. In this context, it is crucial for everyone involved in education to be watchful depending on the local situation and to ensure that children's education is balanced with the highest regard for infection prevention. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) has therefore made every effort to guarantee that youngsters can learn as much as possible without falling behind. Further, it is known that coronavirus infections are less severe in youth than those in adults. Moreover, youngsters are unlikely to be virus super spreaders (Ludvigsson, 2020). There have been multiple outbreaks among elementary and middle school students during club activities and classes with insufficient infection control. Therefore, suitable precautions must be taken during face-to-face education to prevent infection. In addition, in order to continue providing students with an enlightening education, it is essential to understand the psychological uneasiness felt by teachers during the COVID19 pandemic, as well as the factors contributing to this fear.

In the Philippines, after more than two years of the pandemic, the country is shifting from online to face-to-face schooling. In November 2021, twenty months after the onset of the epidemic, 100 public schools and 30 private schools participated in a pilot program of limited face-to-face classes, marking the first formal reinstatement of face-to-face classes in the nation. Just recently, in November 2022, students have begun to fully return to their classrooms even with a limited capacity. According to the spokesman for the Department of Education (DepEd), the decision to resume face-to-face classes was its "greatest accomplishment" in the first 100 days of the Marcos administration. Students in the Philippines may be ready to return to school, but they still teachers' have a great deal to worry about because the pandemic is not yet over. People should be urged to stick to health behaviors despite the return of social engagement chances. Learning skills of students were hampered and teachers clamor about the readiness of students mentally, physically, emotionally and socially. Filipino students can only hope for the best when things return to "normal" as the success of the reintroduction of in-person classes is still uncertain (Rappler,2022). With this, teachers are more than challenged to return to the classroom and resume teaching where the children are, given that the current scenario has negatively impacted the educational standing of learners, causing teachers in the classrooms to worry and test their resilience.

Locally, as the number of COVID-19 cases in Davao continued to fall in the Division of Davao City, all public schools have returned to traditional face-to-face set-ups. In order to accommodate more than 16,000 face-to-face pupils, the Davao City National High School (DCNHS) decided on double-shift class sessions on November 2 due to a lack of classrooms and teachers. With this, teachers are pushed to double their class sizes and efforts to ensure that all registered students receive a quality education (Daugdaug, 2022).

This scenario is prevalent in other secondary schools. Inadequate infrastructure, classrooms, teachers, students' readiness and learning capacities as well as wellness support for students were a few of the problems teachers encountered.

The same is true and observed in Cogon National High School of the Island Garden City of Samal Division (IGACOS), Region XI. Face-to-face training has been shown to increase peer-to-peer and peer-to-teacher interactions. Teachers play a vital role in enabling student-directed learning by engaging students' interests and motivations, often through close proximity interactions in a practical classroom setting (Sokele et al., 2019). Despite this, the majority of teachers struggle to adjust to the new conditions. Face-to-face training has currently influenced the learning process in many classes or hands-on sessions due to the limited number of resources and the necessity to follow to COVID-19 regulations as well as testing teachers' resiliency.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This background inspired the researcher to conduct a qualitative study on the lived experiences, encountered challenges, coping methods, and academic insights of secondary teachers during the initial resumption of face-to-face sessions in public elementary schools. Notably, there are few research and literary works on face-to-face schooling in the Philippines during the pandemic that focus on teachers' experiences at the primary level. The majority of international research has focused on the introduction of face-to-face classes in high school and higher education. In addition, the findings of this study may serve as a basis for policymakers, school administrators, and teachers to enhance their processes and practices in relation to the full implementation of face-to-face lessons during the post-pandemic, as well as a basis for future local empirical research. Consequently, this work is deemed to be of great significance.

➤ *Research Questions*

- What are the experiences of secondary school teachers in the full resumption of face-to-face classes?
- What are the teachers' coping mechanisms for the challenges and difficulties they encountered related to the full resumption of face-to-face classes?
- What are the management insights learned by the secondary school teachers on the full resumption of face-to-face classes?

III. THEORETICAL LENS

This study is anchored on the Behaviorist learning theory, notably the Direct Instruction approach, which was developed in the 1960s and focuses on the requirements of children in face-to-face instruction or mode of instruction. Based on behaviorist learning theory, Direct Instruction breaks down each learning assignment into its smallest component and requires mastery of easier skills before moving on to more difficult assignments. Students are grouped according to their level of achievement, teachers are provided with precisely written lesson plans, students respond vo-

cally and as a group to the teacher, and the group does not go on until everyone has mastered the material.

Important component of the Model is the use of small group training in a face-to-face setting. It has been discovered that rapid-fire, teacher-led, small-group instruction is more effective than individual instruction. It also emphasizes oral communication skills, which are vital for pupils from economically disadvantaged and non-English-speaking households. In addition, students can serve as models for one another and engage in repeated practice. The goal of direct instruction in small groups is to elicit a high response rate from pupils, which is facilitated by unison or choral responses. This allows for more active practice on each ability and more frequent instructor feedback on each student's progress. In addition, the importance of corrective feedback is highlighted. Stromer (1975) showed that errors reduce when corrections (demonstrating the correct response after an error has been made) and differential praise are applied. Overall, the teacher's presentation of important factors was swift and variable. Direct Instruction pace and correcting can thus have a substantial impact on student academic progress and classroom engagement.

In keeping with its pledge to reinstate 5 days of in-person instruction, the Department of Education (DepEd) has released the parameters for the school calendar and extracurricular activities for the 2022–2023 academic year. Vice President and Secretary Sara Z. Duterte signed the DepEd order declaring that classes will begin on August 22 and end on July 7, 2023. There will be 203 instructional days, or such number as may be determined by later issuances in the

case that unforeseen occurrences modify the school calendar.

DepEd also provides guidance and direction for the reinstatement of classes and the gradual restoration of five days of in-person learning activities. In accordance with DO 034, section 2022, in order to reopen schools and implement five (5) days of in-person classes, compliance with the normal pre-pandemic regulatory permits and licenses, as required by law or ordinance, will suffice. DepEd only suggested five days of in-person instruction, blended learning, and full remote learning till October 31, 2022. By November 2, 2022, all public and private schools must move to five days of in-person education. No school may implement distance learning or blended learning without also implementing alternative delivery modes as indicated in DO 21, s. 2019 (Policy Guidelines on the K–12 Basic Education Program) and DO 01, s. 2022. (Revised Policy Guidelines on Homeschooling Program).

The School Calendar and Activities for SY 2022-2023 will be implemented according to national elementary and secondary schools, including both public and private Community Learning Centers (CLCs). Private schools, public universities, and community colleges may utilize the calendar. In addition, students can commence classes between the first Monday of June and the last day of August. In addition, the Classroom-based and System Assessments, the Learning Recovery and Continuity Plan (LRCP), and the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030 will help schools administer the K–12 Basic Education Program effectively despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

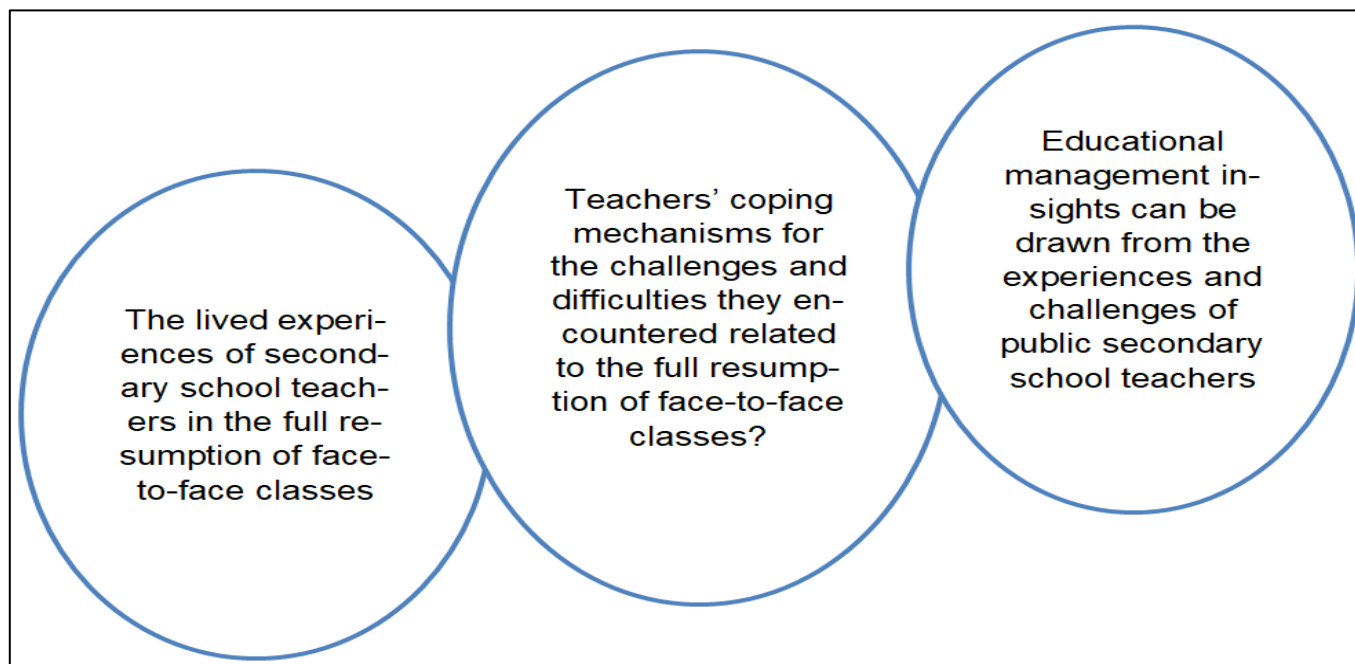


Fig 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

IV. METHODOLOGY

Presented in this chapter is the method. It includes the Philosophical Assumption, Qualitative Assumption, Design and Procedure, Research, Participants, Role of the Researcher, Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Trustworthiness of the Study.

➤ *Philosophical Assumption*

The philosophical assumptions of the study were used in analyzing and interpreting my results. At its most basic level, psychological research can be used to explain and forecast parts of the human experience, improve our understanding of the lived experiences of different groups of people, or criticize and change the current conditions in which we live and seek to grow (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2013). According to Creswell (2012), the *ontological issue* relates to the nature of reality and its characteristics. Qualitative researchers embrace the idea of multiple realities and report on these multiple realities by exploring multiple forms of evidence from different individuals' perspectives and experiences. Hence, when studying individuals, I as a qualitative researcher conduct a study with the intent of reporting these multiple realities. Evidence of multiple realities includes the use of multiple forms of evidence in themes using the actual words of different individuals and presenting different perspectives.

With the *epistemological assumption*, as a researcher, I aim to become as close to the people I am studying as possible. The individual perspectives I gathered from the field research are used to compile subjective evidence. Therefore, conducting a qualitative study means that I tried to get as close as possible to the participants being studied collecting subjective evidences assembled based on individual views. Since epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate, I was able to discover how knowledge is known, through the subjective experiences of people. These are important contexts for understanding what the participants are saying. The longer researchers stay in the field or get to know the participants, the more they know what they know from firsthand information (Guba & Lincoln, 2008).

Qualitative researchers make their values clear in a study, whereas quantitative researchers bring their values to a study. This is the *axiological assumption* that qualitative research is based on. In this study, I acknowledged the study's value-laden nature and actively reported their values and prejudices, as well as the value-laden nature of field data (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative research processes or *rhetoric* are described as inductive, emergent, and influenced by my experience gathering and evaluating data. Rather than being handed down wholly from a theory or from the perspectives of the inquirer, the logic I shall follow is inductive, starting from the ground up. During the data analysis, I'll take a step-by-step approach to examine the data in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the subject at hand.

➤ *Qualitative Assumptions*

Individuals want to comprehend their reality and generate their own unique meanings that correlate to their experiences using Social Constructivism as an interpretative framework for qualitative assumptions (Creswell, 2013). These meanings are not imprinted or innate in each person. Rather, meanings emerge as a result of interactions with others (Creswell, 2013). These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas. Further, as a researcher, my purpose is to rely as much as possible on the perspectives of the participants. These subjective meanings are frequently disputed in social and historical contexts. In other words, they are developed through interactions with others as well as historical and cultural conventions that work in people's lives, rather than being merely imprinted on them.

➤ *Design and Procedure*

The study was conducted using a qualitative-inquiry-based phenomenological research design using open-ended questions. Phenomenological research is a kind of investigation in which the researcher identifies the essence of participants' descriptions of a phenomenon. The researcher brackets or sets aside his or her own experiences in order to understand the experiences of the study participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher was able to produce a description of the teachers' shared meanings with regard to their experiences in the full resumption of face to face classes while emphasizing the similarity of their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenological approaches are particularly effective at bringing to the fore individual experiences and perceptions from their own points of view, and so challenging structural or normative assumptions. Adding an interpretive component to phenomenological research allows it to inform, support, or question policy and action by allowing it to be utilized as the foundation for practical theory (Lester et al., 2009). As a result, the research methodology is a good fit for capturing the thoughts and experiences of teachers in an inclusive setting. According to Bogart (2017), gaining a clearer image of the occurrence will aid in filling research gaps and providing suggestions for improvement, which in the context of the current study refers to teachers' experiences in the classroom. The study attempted to present the "living worlds" of the participants, finally exposing their personal relevance in relation to the experience, as a design that captures the experiences of a "chosen few" addressing specific phenomena.

Further, this study also employed participants' observations in an In-Depth Interview (IDI). According to Denzel & Lincoln (2000), as cited by Lee (2007) in Pelobello (2015), this method involves the use and collection of variety of interviews, observations, history, interactional and visual texts that describe routines, problems and meaning of individual lives. It is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions that explore a social or human problem. It builds a holistic picture, analyzes words, reports, detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

Furthermore, real life situations need to be explored in terms of their contextual nature as seen by the participants. Therefore, phenomenology is an appropriate and applicable technique to explore the topics on the lived experiences of home economics teachers in public secondary schools. Common themes will be analyzed, coded and extracted from all of the interviews.

V. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

This study was conducted in DepEd Region XI, Division of Island Garden City of Samal (IGACOS), specifically in Cogon National High School. Only 10 participants from different school as the key informants were included and were purposely selected based on the nature of their work as classroom teachers and who already experienced working in the Department of Education for at least three years or more. The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses. According to Bernard (2006), it is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants. It was the researcher who decided what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience. Purposive sampling is exemplified through the key informant technique wherein one or a few individuals are solicited to act as guides to the phenomenon. Key informants are observant, reflective members of the community of interest who know much about the topic and are both able and willing to share their knowledge.

To gain a variance in perspective from participants, the effort was extended to include both male and female as well as individuals with various levels of educational training, attainment and rank. Specifically, the inclusion criteria include the following: (1) Teachers who have been teaching in the secondary classrooms for three years or more; (2) had experienced teaching in the old and new normal; and (3) secondary teachers who experienced challenges in the resumption of full face-to-face classes in school.

➤ *Role of the Researcher*

In qualitative research, the researcher's role is to try to gain access to the needed data while exploring the research participants' ideas and feelings on the phenomenon being studied. This is not a simple task, to say the least. This entails inviting people to discuss topics that are potentially highly personal to them. Reliving prior experiences might be tough at times when the experiences being explored are somehow negative to them and are still fresh in the participant's thoughts. My first job as a researcher is to protect participants and their data in any method that data is acquired. Participants shall be given explicit and articulated mechanisms for such safeguarding.

➤ *Data Collection*

In gathering the data, I prepared the interview guide which is composed of three (3) main significant questions which inquired about the experiences of secondary school teachers. A thorough deliberation was made on the aspect of

determining the problems of teachers in their effort to become effective and efficient new normal teachers in schools. I made sure that my interview guide was validated by the experts. Moreover, I made sure that all ethical protocols were observed and implemented as I collected the data.

An official letter was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao City, DepEd Division Office, District Supervisor and to the Principal of the Schools asking permission to conduct the study. After receiving the approval letter, the conditions set by the approving authority will be considered and met. Then, the interview sessions followed. The interviews were conducted in public places with private areas to protect confidentiality for some of the participants and since the study was conducted during the pandemic - COVID-19, Facebook Messenger, Google Sheets, Zoom and Google meet were also used to other participants to adhere to the protocols issued by the Department of Health and the Inter-Agency task Force. The interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants.

In addition, participants were asked to refrain from using names during the interview (names of people and places). At each interview, I discussed the purpose of the study, the structure of the interview and the nature, benefits and risks of participation were discussed with the participants. They were, likewise, informed that participation is voluntary and that all the information gathered are held with strict measures of confidentiality. They were informed that there is no financial compensation for their participation and their participation could raise awareness and provide insight on the phenomenon being investigated. Right after, the transcription of In-depth Interviews (IDI) proceedings was done with the help of the note taker and recorder. I also utilized Inscribe software trial version in transcribing the participants' responses and I also ensured the authentic responses of the informants. In the process, I was able to establish rapport with the interviewees to elicit honest and open responses. After the IDI process, I re-stated or summarized the information, then, presented it to them to vouch accuracy.

The sharing of findings with the participants allows them to critically analyze and comment on it. The participants also affirmed that the summaries presented to them is an original reflection of their views, feelings, and experiences. In this study, their affirmation on the accuracy and completeness of the information contributed much to the credibility of the study. The data gathered from the IDI were organized accordingly into themes for analysis.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

In this study all the data collected were carefully examined and thoughtfully analyzed. The researcher first described personal experiences with the phenomenon under study. The researcher began with full description of her own experience of the phenomenon. This is an attempt to set aside the researcher's personal experiences so that the focus can be directed to the participants. She developed a list of significant statements. She then finds statements about how individuals were experiencing the topic, lists these signifi-

cant statements as having equal worth, and works to develop a list of nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping, statements. The researcher took the significant statements and then grouped them into larger units of information, called “meaning units” or themes. She wrote a description of “what” the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon. Next, she wrote a description of “how” the experience happened. This was called “structural description,” and the inquirer reflects on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced. Finally, she wrote a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions. This passage is the “essence” of the experience and represents the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study.

➤ *Thematic Content Analysis.*

A thematic analysis strives to identify patterns of themes in the interview data. One of the advantages of thematic analysis is that it’s a flexible method which can be used both for explorative studies, where the researcher do not have a clear idea of what patterns is being searched for, as well as for more deductive studies, where the researcher know exactly what he or she is are interested in. No matter which type of study is being done and for what purpose, the most important thing in the analysis is that the researcher respects the data and try to represent the results of the interview as honestly as possible (Montensen, 2020).

➤ *Document Analysis.*

Document analysis is a form of qualitative research that uses a systematic procedure to analyze documentary evidence and answer specific research questions. Similar to other methods of analysis in qualitative research, document analysis requires repeated review, examination, and interpretation of the data in order to gain meaning and empirical knowledge of the construct being studied. Document analysis can be conducted as a stand-alone study or as a component of a larger qualitative or mixed methods study, where it is often used to triangulate findings gathered from another data source (e.g., interview or focus group transcripts, observation, surveys). When used in triangulation, documents can corroborate or refute, elucidate, or expand on findings across other data sources, which helps to guard against bias (Frey, Bruce B., 2018).

➤ *Triangulation of Data.*

Triangulation means using more than one method to collect data on the same topic. This is a way of assuring the validity of research through the use of a variety of methods to collect data on the same topic, which involves different types of samples as well as methods of data collection. However, the purpose of triangulation is not necessarily to cross-validate data but rather to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon (Kulkarni, Prashant, 2013).

➤ *Environmental Triangulation*

The use of Environmental triangulation is limited only to those studies where the findings can be influenced by certain environmental factors. This type of triangulation uses different settings, locations and other factors such as time, day, season in which the study took place. The idea is to

determine which of these factors influence the information received, these factors are then changed to see if the findings are the same. If the findings remain unaltered under varying environmental factors, then validity can be established (Naeem, Saira, 2019). In this study, such triangulation was used considering that the requirements as mentioned was the use of environmental triangulation best suit the environment of the research being conducted.

➤ *Analytical Framework*

According to Braun and Clark (2006) methods of qualitative data analysis fall in two groups. The first group consists of methods driven by an epistemological or theoretical position, which have limited variability in how they are applied within their frameworks, such as conversation analysis (CA) and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and methods which are situated within a broad theoretical framework and can therefore be used in a variety of ways within those frameworks, such as grounded theory (GT), discourse analysis (DA) narrative analysis (NA).

The second group includes methods independent of theory and epistemology, which can be applied across a range of different theoretical and epistemological approaches and are therefore very flexible. One such method is thematic analysis, which through the theoretical freedom “provides flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Braun and Clark, 2006).

I observed several steps in conducting thematic analysis. The first stage in extracting qualitative data for analysis from the tape recordings was transcription. This was done to gain greater familiarity with the data and deeper insight. I relied on my own resources to do the transcription with the use of my personal computer and some reliable headphones. I use several nights to listen to the interviews to deepen my understanding on the nuances of the language and semantics of the participants.

Practice varied considerably in terms of agreeing conventions with transcribers. Some negotiated themselves to lay-out and conventions required, including researchers who wanted the kind of detailed transcriptions appropriate for conversations or narrative analysis. Others were sometimes less directly involved, and accepted the conventions generally used by the one transcribing the information.

The next step as data extraction and analysis. I used manual techniques based on note taking and summary while listening to the recordings. My manual technique usually included some process of verbatim recordings of selected spoken words. I selected quotations about central issues, or when what was said seemed important or interesting.

I used a number of different techniques as taught to me by my thesis adviser. I marked up transcripts with colored pens or sorted data by cutting and pasting. I used forms of thematic grids and charts, the framework technique as developed by the National Centre for Social Research (Ritchie et al, 2003). This technique was useful to me in the process of

coding, sorting and collecting data for interrogation. This technique was very useful in understanding links and relationships between issues. All these efforts and procedure included saving verbatim spoken words from the transcripts, which could be cross referenced to the thematic displays or the maps.

To summarize, the thematic analysis method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) which consisted of six (6) phases used in analyzing the data.

- Phase 1. I familiarized myself with the data by reading the whole data set and noting down initial ideas;
- Phase 2. I generated initial codes, with coded being the most basic segments of the raw data that can identify a feature of the data that appears interesting;

- Phase 3. I searched for themes by sorting different codes into potential themes and collated all data extracts within identified themes;
- Phase 4. I reviewed the themes and refined them further (at the level of coded data extracts and the entire data set) and produced a thematic map showing relationships between themes and sub themes;
- Phase 5. I defined and named themes, making sure they give the reader immediate sense of what the theme is all about.
- Phase 6. I wrote the report to convince the reader of the merit and validity of the analysis (within and across the themes), used data extracts embedded within an analytic narrative to make arguments in relation to the research question.

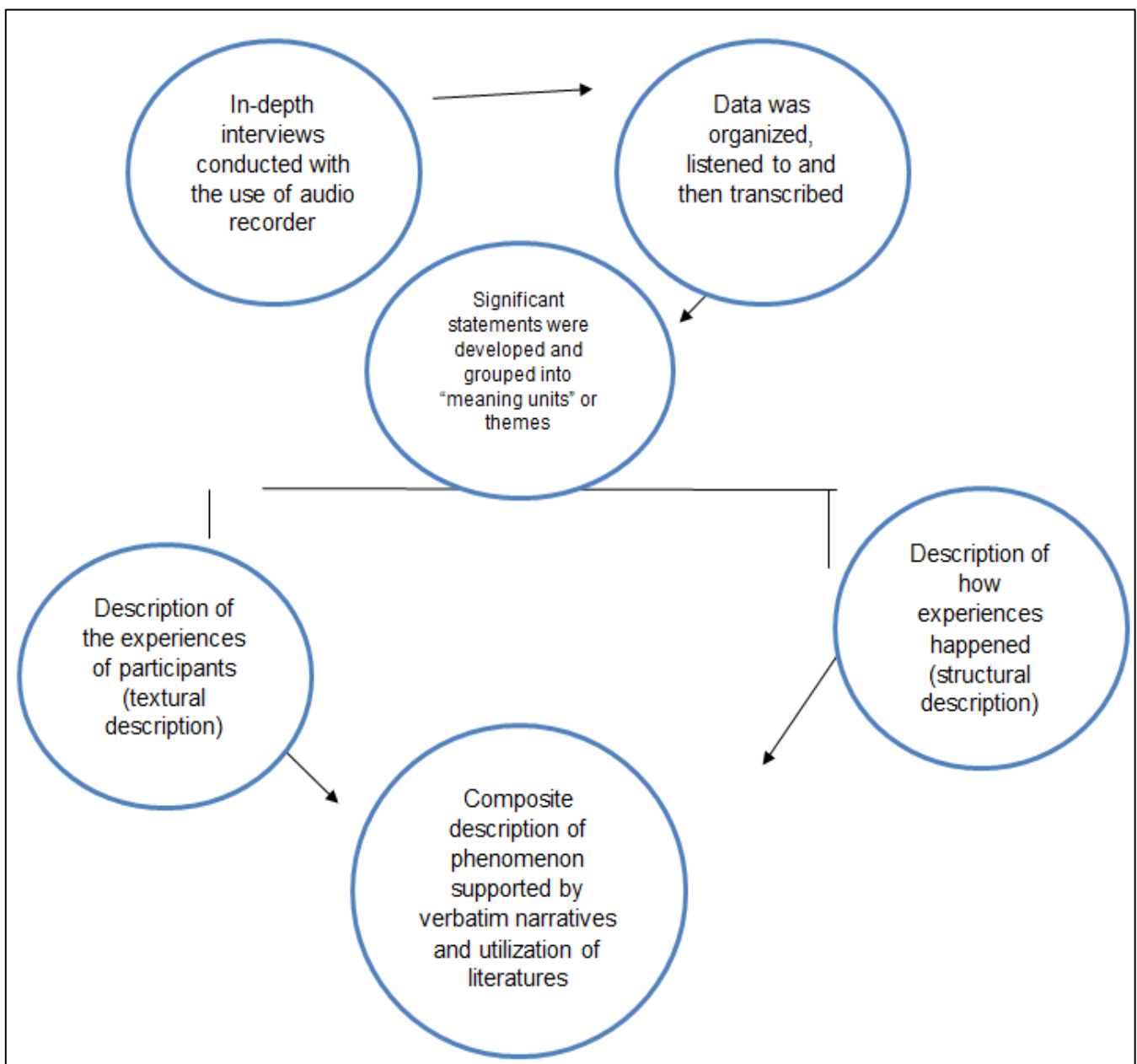


Fig 2. Analytical Framework of the Study

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part of the study dealt with the research questions and their answers based on the responses of the participants of the study. The participants revealed their lived experiences as they discern their first-hand experiences in the full implementation of the face-to-face classes in public secondary schools. The participants' challenges encountered, coping mechanisms and insights were also presented in this part of the research specifically in Cogon National High School of the Island Garden City of Samal Division (IGACOS), Region XI. In this chapter, the results of the thematic analysis are presented. It is followed by discussions arranged according to themes and subthemes that were generated.

A. Lived Experiences of Secondary School Teachers in the Full Resumption of Face-to-Face Classes

In analyzing the lived experiences of the public secondary school teachers in the full implementation of the face-to-face classes, based on the interview answers shared by the teachers themselves (P1-P8), I was able to identify five (3) major themes. These are: focusing on learners' interpersonal skills, teaching with limitations and hurdling work fatigues.

The public secondary school teachers have expressed different challenging but worthwhile experiences in teaching learners in schools but the majority of these experiences are learning-filled scenarios which they believed to be the reasons why they continue to manage successfully teaching and learning processes in their respective schools. The majority described Traditional (Face-to-Face) instruction, sometimes referred to as in-person (F2F) instruction, concentrates on a number of components, such as lectures, capstone projects, group projects, laboratories, studios, and so forth. Synchronous instruction is provided in a physical learning environment (with the necessary safety precautions), which means that, "traditionally," all of the students are present at the same time. The face-to-face connection between the student, teacher, and students themselves is a big benefit of the conventional classroom. Both the instructor and the other students serve as sources of inspiration for the pupils.

➤ *Focusing on Learners Interpersonal Skills.*

Filipino learners are connecting with others less in person and spending exponentially more time in front of screens because of the growth of social media and computer technologies. Due to this, socializing at crucial ages when communication skills are developing has already dropped. The ongoing pandemic has made the problem worse by fostering a secluded learning atmosphere. With all of these issues in play, it's possible that the COVID-19 generation of kids will continue to fall behind in learning international, interpersonal, and nonverbal communication skills, which are crucial for interacting with others and building connections throughout our lives. Learners who are being confined in the comfort of their homes were used to being alone facing gadgets and tend to have lesser connections with their surroundings. This led to the creation of the theme related to teachers focusing on learner's interpersonal skills.

From the participants, the following words were noted:

- I felt contentment and relieved: truly found out the big difference in teaching through modules and face to face implementation. I focused more on teaching students to interact with their classmates. (P1)
- I feel excited in the full resumption of the face-to-face classes. It is exciting because of the actual interaction between the teacher and the students. For me, learning is more fun when it happens inside the classroom where I can easily clarify things about my lesson. On the contrary, it is undeniable that I am greatly challenged in dealing students who are emotionally unstable and those who have difficulty in coping with stress. I observed that learners needed to be taught in terms of collaborating with classmates since their confidence in the class are different. They need to interact in the classroom. (P7)
- My experience as a secondary school teacher in the full resumption of face-to-face classes was indeed challenging. It requires lots of adjustment in terms of teaching strategies and in teaching learning to become socially involved. (P8)

As narrated by participant 1, she was relieved and pleased with her discovery of the stark contrast between module-based instruction and traditional classroom delivery. Her primary focus was on helping her students develop positive relationships with one another. P7 shared that she was looking forward to getting back into the swing of things with her in-person classes. The excitement stems from the fact that the instructor may engage with the pupils directly. She enjoyed education more when it takes place in a classroom setting where I can readily address student questions and concerns. However, it was true that teachers faced significant difficulties in dealing with emotionally unstable and/or stress-averse learners. Since students' levels of confidence in class vary, she found that they needed guidance when it came to working with their peers. In order to learn, they must engage with one another. P8 added that the transition back to full-time face-to-face sessions as a secondary school teacher was difficult for him. Changing one's approach to teaching and one's approach to learning in order to become socially involved was a massive undertaking.

The result is related to the notion of Watermeyer et al., (2020) that less pupil connection as a result of physical separation diminishes learning motivation and enthusiasm. A lack of true interpersonal interactions contributes to demotivation and disengagement. When there is a genuine interaction between students and teachers in the classroom, psychological well-being, motivation, and a sense of belonging result. In addition, the immediate campus environment affects students' motivation, well-being, self-image, and achievement. Kahu and Nelson (2018) investigate how budgeting aid, psychological support, and life skills courses can improve students' health and academic performance. Less conducive was the environment to student interaction.

➤ *Teaching with Limitations.*

The government's plan to gradually resume face-to-face classes in select schools across the country has been bolstered by the recent decline in COVID-19 cases, leading to a sense of optimism. Even in the full implementation of classes in schools. Nonetheless, certain educators encounter significant difficulties with conducting in-person classes and attending on-site due to various reasons. Educators have conveyed apprehension regarding the restricted timeframe available to address the diverse educational needs of students. Several educators have also indicated that they possess restricted teaching and learning materials. There are concerns regarding the preparedness of students for in-person instruction. The instructors encountered difficulties in maintaining focus on students in both traditional classroom settings and self-paced instructional formats. Similar to the students, educators also expressed challenges in auditory perception of their pupils as a result of the utilization of facial masks and shields. Teachers at present teach with limitations in all aspects.

Some responses on this theme of the participants were noted:

- I feel excited at first but we have made thorough preparation before the implementation of full face-to-face classes. There was difficulty in the first few weeks since the threat of Covid 19 is still around the corner. Teaching with constraints like the limitations in contact, limitations in distance and in even teaching are difficult. (P2)
- The teachers were innovative enough to solve the problem by having a shifting of classes but teaching with all the limitations is something that is really difficult. (P4)
- Limitations in the classroom set-up – the classroom is very crowded. It's hard to maintain the cleanliness since there are two sections that occupy the classroom, Grade 12 in the morning and 11 in the afternoon. (P5)

When asked about their specific experiences, P2 shared that Initially, he experienced a sense of enthusiasm; however, it is important to note that teachers engaged in comprehensive preparations prior to the execution of in-person instruction. The initial weeks presented challenges due to the persistent presence of the Covid-19 threat. Educating under constraints such as restricted physical contact, limited geographical proximity, and other instructional limitations can pose significant challenges.

P4 added that educators demonstrated ingenuity in resolving the issue through implementing a rotation of classes. However, instructing under such constraints presents a formidable challenge. P5 expressed further that one of the constraints in the classroom environment is the high density of students, which results in overcrowding. The challenge of upholding cleanliness in the classroom arises due to the dual occupancy of the space by two distinct cohorts, namely Grade 12 in the morning and Grade 11 in the afternoon.

This finding is related to the findings of Hlescu et.al. (2020) that students gain knowledge via observing others, touching and interacting with equipment in practical activities, manipulating information, and asking questions.

Throughout COVID-19, practical assignments were transferred to online classrooms. To accommodate remote and distance teaching methods, lecturers frequently offered practical assignments in virtual classrooms, making every effort to create an immersive setting. Students might see presentations, films, and images, with possibilities for simultaneous assessment. Further, during practical exercises, students learn through peer-to-peer interpretation and observation of practical action. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, kinesthetic learning was possible for children who participated in hands-on activities. In addition to touch, students learned through their observations and interactions. As a result of COVID-19, students have fewer opportunity to physically connect with their learning activities and resources. Despite this, Biggs and Tang (2011) say that effective learning involves the activation of numerous sensory modalities, including hearing, touch, sight, speech, and scent.

➤ *Teachers' Fatigue.*

It is essential to create a conducive learning environment in the classroom. Those who continued in-person training during the pandemic established and adhered to rules to maintain the safety of in-person classroom instruction. Rarely did these methods produce desired results. There is a connection between delaying graduation and rigorously enforcing minimal separation requirements and lower ratings on national student experience surveys. The physical separation of students, which was inherently unsettling for individuals leaving their previous environment, had a significant negative impact on student learning and meaning-making. With these, teachers exert their efforts to look for solutions and perform multiple tasks in the classroom leading to fatigue and stress.

When asked about their feelings and emotions being a teacher in the new normal, the following words were considered:

It was advantage to the part of the learners because they can see their teachers teaching well about the possible output, they could have but when it comes to the impact that the learners might experienced during the time of pandemic, teachers had hard time in understanding of what they have been through. Teachers experience personal and professional fatigue. (P5)

Now that we implemented the full face-to-face classes in our school, I feel happy because of the contentment in my heart every time I was able to deliver well my lesson/s to the learners and was able to answer some of their questions. However, the other side of me would say that implementing a full face-to-face class is so tiring especially now that I have only one vacant a day. I felt stressed and burdened. (P6)

Being a teacher is complex. Most especially in the present time. One of the reasons of its complexities is dealing with varied or diverse learners. Teachers are burned out and felt emotional and physical fatigue. (P7)

P5 explained that the learners were afforded an advantage as they were able to observe their teachers competently imparting knowledge regarding potential outcomes. However, in terms of the impact that learners may have experienced during the pandemic, teachers encountered difficulty in comprehending the challenges that they faced. Educators encounter both personal and professional exhaustion. P6 added that with the recent implementation of full face-to-face classes in our school, I am pleased to report that I have experienced a sense of satisfaction in successfully delivering my lessons to the learners and competently addressing their inquiries. On the contrary, an alternative perspective could argue that the execution of a comprehensive in-person course can be quite exhausting, particularly given my current schedule with only one available period. The individual experienced feelings of stress and a sense of being weighed down. P7 shared further that the profession of teaching is multifaceted and intricate. Particularly in the contemporary era. One of the factors contributing to its intricacy is the management of a heterogeneous student population. Educators are experiencing burnout and are experiencing both emotional and physical exhaustion.

This finding is related to the study of Spitzer (2022) that several COVID-19 health and safety regulations impeded the efficacy of schooling. Although required for face-to-face instruction, the use of a face mask may inhibit social and verbal interaction between students and teachers. Spitzer investigates the pros and cons of talking using a face mask, which can absorb higher frequencies and reduce visual lip signals. Lastly, the discussion lacks purpose. Continuously speaking through a face mask may cause voice fatigue due to the additional effort required to speak. It might lead to mental tiredness and further fatigue. Ribeiro et al. (2020) compare the effect of wearing a face mask in a working group versus a vital activities group. The face mask caused exhaustion, vocal impairment, vocal fatigue, and voice irregularities. Attempting to speak intelligibly while maintaining coordination between breathing and speaking has a negative impact on the vocal tract of professionals who wear face masks. This results in vocal fatigue, which is associated with mental fatigue. Fatigue and a sense of exertion result from mental exhaustion. Fatigue also revolved on how teachers are professionally and personally stressed.

Further, this major theme generated sub-themes relating to the other challenges hurdled by teachers in public schools. These sub themes are heavy additional workloads, interactions hindered by protocols and the obvious learning gaps. These factors are considered the reason why teachers felt challenged in the classroom. Further, these themes are specifically discussed in the following.

➤ *Heavy Additional Workloads.*

The present investigation concerns the phenomenon of teacher burnout, which denotes a state in which educators experience a diminished capacity to perform their duties optimally due to an overwhelming burden of responsibilities and associated stressors. Teacher burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and attitudinal fatigue or exhaustion that is characterized by a sense of discomfort and diminished en-

joyment in the act of teaching. Educators who encounter burnout may cultivate unfavorable dispositions towards their pupils, which can diminish their instructional efficacy. If a teacher experiences burnout, the educational system may suffer as this key component of the system may no longer provide its full benefits. If a teacher experiences work exhaustion, it may lead to indifference and unwillingness to be involved in every student activity, which can ultimately result in unsatisfactory fulfillment of the needs of children with special needs. The individual has expressed apprehensions regarding the substantial workload borne by educators in public schools and has advocated for the allocation of additional time by the government to facilitate lesson preparation, output evaluation, grade computation, and student progress monitoring. Ultimately, the physical and mental well-being of educators is compromised.

These were emphasized by the participants when they mentioned the following:

- Teachers made adjustment on the teaching methods and strategies so that learners could easily grasp on the lessons. Teachers also have increased teaching load which demanded more preparations and time at work leading to stress and work burnout. (P2)
- Teachers are very confused of the many tasks that need to be done and to be submitted. (P6)
- Classroom is populated with bigger size of students than the required number. Actual experience of the lesson through activities is greatly affected due to limited space. loaded with paper works and other extra tasks that are so stressful. (P7)

Participants 2, 6 and 7 expressed emotionally the same sentiments. According to them, educators implemented modifications to their pedagogical approaches and techniques in order to facilitate learners' comprehension of the subject matter. Educators are experiencing an augmented teaching workload, necessitating additional preparation and time spent on the job, resulting in elevated levels of stress and work-related exhaustion. Educators often experience confusion due to the multitude of tasks that require completion and submission. Further, The classroom is overpopulated with a larger number of students than the designated capacity. The efficacy of lesson delivery through experiential activities is significantly impeded by spatial constraints. The abundance of paperwork and supplementary responsibilities can induce significant levels of stress.

This result is related to the notion that teachers are burdened with preparing modules, facilitating online sessions, and attending schools for a small number of in-person classes, a triple load. As COVID-19 incidents have dropped, the administration is now optimistic about its plan to progressively introduce face-to-face instruction in some schools around the country. Face-to-face instruction and physically reporting on location, however, pose substantial challenges for some teachers and their pupils. Teachers have began conducting sessions in their houses two years ago. Teachers were puzzled by the new working environment in the middle of the ongoing epidemic when the Department of Education

(DepEd) introduced limited face-to-face classes and forced teachers to be present every day.

As a response, DepEd issued Memorandum No. 29 or the Work Arrangements in the Department of Education During the Imposition of Alert Level 1 System for COVID 19 Response in April of this year, mandating 100 percent onsite reporting of teaching and non-teaching personnel in areas subject to the most lax alert status. The government has begun implementing limited face-to-face training, in addition to modular and online programs. In addition to attempting to overcome the hurdles and challenges caused by the Philippines' sluggish transition to limited face-to-face classes, these teachers are urging that the government provide more assistance and recognize their struggles. As instructors continued to practice their three teaching methods, they expressed hope that the government would investigate their true and difficult position.

➤ *Interactions Hindered by Protocols.*

The utilization of face masks has been shown to be effective in mitigating the transmission of CoVid-19, particularly given the potential for asymptomatic individuals to spread the virus. The act of covering the lower half of the face has been found to diminish the capacity for communication, interpretation, and emulation of the facial expressions of individuals with whom we engage. The recognition of positive emotions tends to decrease, while negative emotions tend to be intensified. The reduction of emotional mimicry, contagion, and overall emotionality can have a negative impact on the bonding between teachers and learners, group cohesion, and learning outcomes, as emotions play a significant role in driving the learning process. It is imperative to thoroughly evaluate and elucidate the advantages and drawbacks of implementing face masks in educational institutions, and ensure that such information is effectively communicated to both educators and pupils. That is why in the study, following the protocols like wearing the facemask was considered as a challenge for teachers teaching in secondary schools.

This concern was proven by the following participants in the study:

- Wearing facemask and following other protocols sometimes hinder me to explain longer and teach further concepts. Sometimes, while teaching, I feel I lack oxygen to breathe. (P4)
- Not so conducive for learning because of lack of materials needed for learning like television, electric/ceiling fan, etc. The hot temperature in the classroom plus the masks on faces are extremely barriers to learning and teaching more. (P5)
- The health protocols that needed to be followed are helpful but sometimes delay teaching and learning activities and hinder social interactions and connections like the social distancing. (P8)

P4 shared that sometimes, wearing a facemask and adhering to other protocols prevents him from explaining and teaching in greater detail. Occasionally, while instructing, he experienced a dearth of oxygen. P5 explained that classrooms are not so conducive to learning due to a lack of learning materials such as television, electric/ceiling fan, etc. The hot classroom temperature and the masks on students' features are significant obstacles to learning and teaching. P8 added that the health protocols that must be adhered to are beneficial, but they can delay teaching and learning activities and impede social interactions and connections, such as social distancing.

This result is supported by Scheller (2020) that the human face serves as a ubiquitous medium for conveying messages, specifically those pertaining to emotional expression. The facial area encompassing the mouth is essential in communicating positive emotions such as smiling, which serves as a social adhesive and promotes favorable social perception and behavior [69]. The inability to observe the lower region of the face presents a significant challenge in identifying positive emotions such as pleasure, joy, happiness, amusement, sociability, and friendliness in individuals who wear masks, given that these emotions are predominantly conveyed through a smiling mouth. Hence, the utilization of face masks primarily hinders our constructive social engagements and our aptitude to comprehend and sympathize with each other. According to a comprehensive cross-cultural study on social perception of smiling individuals, it has been observed that in certain cultures, a smile may be interpreted as an indication of shallowness, dishonesty, or even stupidity. The predominant connotation of a smile, however, unequivocally pertains to a favorable affective state.

Further, UNICEF which is assisting the Departments of Education and Health in the Philippines to plan for the safe, voluntary, and phased reopening of face to face classes in schools in low-risk areas. Low-risk regions are municipalities with a negative two-week growth rate and fewer than one COVID-19 case per 100,000 residents. To ensure the safety of children attending in-person classes, all feasible steps must be taken to prevent the spread of viruses in schools, including: Mask, face shield, and other PPE policies for teachers, school staff, and students must adhere to national and local regulations. Improved hygiene practices and handwashing facilities, frequent cleaning of common surfaces and items, adequate and appropriate ventilation, cohorting and rotating physical presence to preserve physical separation and small groupings, mechanisms for communicating with parents and teachers, and establishing criteria and mandated processes for the temporary closure of schools in the event of a COVID-19 epidemic in the region.

➤ *Obvious Learning Gaps.*

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions to education systems, particularly impacting the most vulnerable learners. This has resulted in the exacerbation of pre-existing inequalities, which may have far-reaching and enduring consequences. The prompt necessitates immediate measures to rectify educational deficiencies and guarantee seamless and uninterrupted academic progression for all students. In the foreseeable future, it will be imperative for educational systems to enhance the resilience of learners by creating conducive environments that equip individuals with the necessary competencies to achieve their maximum capabilities. With this, the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has implemented distance learning modalities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to ensure the continuity of learning. The Department of Education (DepEd) acknowledges the difficulties in providing alternative learning modalities to a significant number of basic education students. Considering the obstacles presented by remote education and the disparities in resource allocation, students who are underperforming and belong to marginalized groups may experience a widening of the achievement gap. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, concerns regarding the standard of fundamental education in the Philippines have been brought to the fore, given the country's poor performance in recent regional and global evaluations of academic achievement. The Department of Education (DepEd) is currently exploring novel approaches to tackle the challenges in education brought about by the pandemic, as well as to attain the desired learning outcomes as students shift towards face-to-face classes.

The participants' thoughts overflowed by expressing the following:

- I have stubborn learners, who are not willing to learn in short very lazy. Their learning gaps are serious and must be bridged by creating innovations and strategies. (P6)
- Learners' absenteeism due to poor interest in their studies and learners are emotionally unstable. Some students are diagnosed with depression which demands or requires teachers' additional time and attention which led them to having learning issues and gaps. (P7)

- The learning gap of the students. All teachers had same assessment that their learning abilities are two years/grade back. (P8)

P6 shared that he usually faced a group of learners who exhibited a persistent resistance to learning, displaying a marked reluctance to engage in educational activities, and demonstrating a notable lack of motivation. The presence of significant learning gaps necessitates the development of innovative approaches and strategies to address them.

P7 expressed that the absenteeism of learners can be attributed to their lack of interest in academic pursuits and emotional instability. Certain students are diagnosed with depression, which necessitates additional time and attention from teachers, resulting in potential learning difficulties and gaps. P8 added that the academic achievement disparity among students. According to the assessments conducted by all the teachers, it has been observed that the learning abilities of the students are lagging behind by two years per grade level.

This scenario is supported by the findings of UNICEF (2022) that teachers encountered unique classroom issues as a result of the longer distance education. Lack of in-person peer interaction has a significant impact on the emotional and cognitive development of children. The lost opportunity for immediate teacher-learner interaction on the lessons retards the development of the learner's competencies and impairs the quality of learning. The ability of children to read, write, and perform basic mathematics, as well as the skills they need to thrive in the twenty-first century economy, have dropped. Less likely are children to return to school the longer they remain missing. Children who are not in school are more likely to engage in child labor, child marriage, and teen pregnancy. Their physical and emotional health, development, safety, and wellbeing are at risk. More time spent online and in front of a screen has increased the probability of online hostility and abuse. They are more susceptible to domestic abuse, gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and child marriage, and child labor, especially in the context of the epidemic. Mental health, psychological support, and health and nutrition services are lacking in schools.

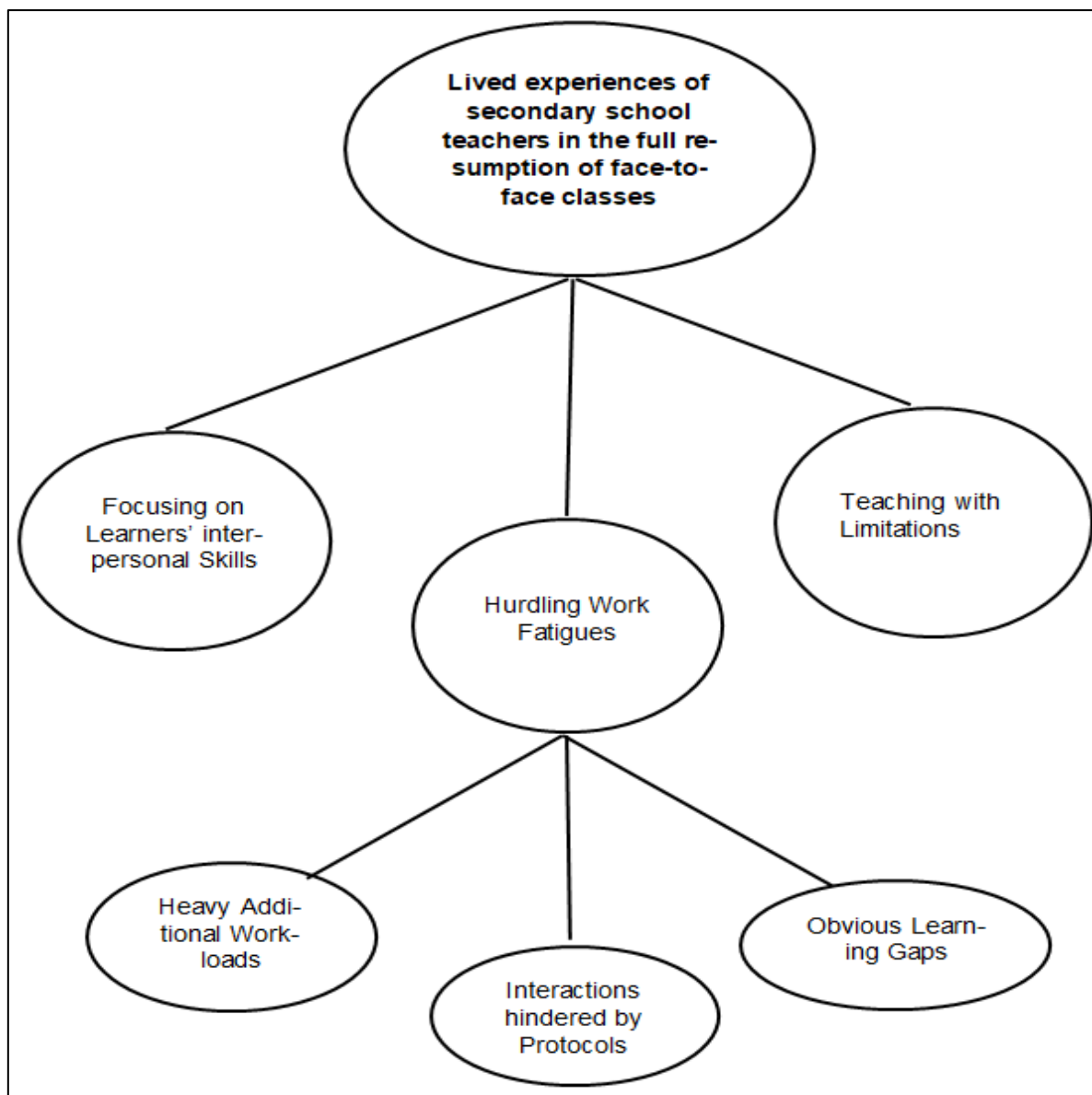


Fig 3. Lived experiences of secondary school teachers in the full resumption of face-to-face classes

B. Teachers' coping mechanisms for the challenges and difficulties they encountered related to the full resumption of face-to-face classes

The second research objective of this study focuses on the coping mechanisms of public secondary school teachers on the challenges they experienced in the full implementation of face-to-face classes in normal schools. Figure four shows the summary of their coping strategies. As seen in Figure 4, the coping strategies of teacher researchers are divided into two (2) major themes. These are creating recovery programs and professional development training for teachers in the new normal. These summarized the coping strategies of the teachers as they deal with the challenges of the current research circumstances.

➤ *Creating Recovery Programs.*

The implementation of a well-designed learning plan or intervention program, which is consistently implemented and utilized throughout the school, is deemed to be the most efficacious approach to address the learning issues among

the students in schools. It can be said that a school's dedication to establishing a secure, compassionate, and considerate educational setting that caters to the needs of all learners is essential in the new normal. The school's adoption of a plan for preventing and intervening in learning loss and challenges may encompass a range of components, such as behavior programs, forms, interaction philosophies, curriculum, and fundamental protocols. Learning programs or curricula that are effective typically incorporate a comprehensive plan of knowledge and competencies that must be acquired by all students and necessitate the participation and backing of the entire school community. Additional instruction tailored to the specific roles of students involved in learning situations. Indeed, schools should have an established uniform intervention program for academic issues.

The participants insights into this regard were noted:

- I created innovations and implemented learning programs for the students who are low performing. (P3)

- I would suggest that teachers should focus only in teaching the basic skills needed by the students and extra tasks not related to their work as teacher because it will consume most of their time instead of teaching the learners. (P6)

The participants of this study presented their ideas as to how they coped with some difficulties or challenges they experienced. P3 developed new teaching strategies and educational initiatives to help students who were not performing up to their potential. P6 explained that because it will take up the majority of their time and distract them from their primary responsibility of instructing the pupils, she believed that teachers should concentrate their efforts solely on imparting the fundamental knowledge and abilities that are essential for their students. Indeed, establishing learning programs is a must.

The finding is related to the generalization of Sigue-Bisnar (2022), schools must create a strategy for recovery response. One of the measures underlined by UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank in their Mission: Recovering Education 2021 campaign is the establishment of more physical schools. In addition, the creation of recovery response techniques can help schools close learning gaps. In March of this year, the DepEd announced that one of its post-pandemic efforts to support schools is the development of a framework for school rehabilitation. Educational institutions will profit in the future from these recovery response plans, which may include activities such as regular student monitoring and assessment, as well as the integration of a variety of on-site and digital learning technology and teaching styles.

Indeed, teachers should implement remediation. It is recommended that schools prioritize remedial education beginning with the current school year in order to address achievement disparities caused by the pandemic's time constraints. In addition to ordinary academics, consideration should be given to tutoring services. The outcomes of remedial learning programs can be used to evaluate each student's reading and numeracy skills, and schools can then modify their present teaching strategies to better suit the requirements of their students.

➤ *Professional Development Training For Teachers.*

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented a multitude of challenges, particularly within the realm of education, where the prevailing experience has shifted towards online interaction and distance learning as the "new normal." Due to the implementation of health protocols that mandate physical distancing, opportunities for face-to-face interaction and personal engagement are restricted. Teacher professional development (TPD) is a confluence of effective practices and strategies, which provides educators with a comprehensive outlook to develop their own professional vision. The study posits that Teacher Professional Development (TPD) serves as a means for educators to augment and refine their knowledge and competencies, as well as foster their professional advancement, given that teaching is a continuous process of learning. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, TPD pro-

grams encompassed a range of initiatives focused on content, pedagogy, technology, action learning, graduate studies, leadership and management, and action research. Amidst the pandemic, educators were presented with opportunities to participate in web-based seminars and educational sessions pertaining to the facilitation of remote instruction, technological proficiency, and psychological well-being. Irrespective of their age and length of service, educators possess a growth-oriented mindset aimed at enhancing their professional skills and becoming more effective in their teaching practice. The individual in question seeks to engage in a process of unlearning outdated knowledge and acquiring new knowledge and skills. This is motivated by a desire to ensure that their students are equipped with the knowledge and skills that are relevant to their current needs and those of the future.

These are how teachers describe coping with the challenges they faced in the new normal. The participants explicitly shared:

- Attending moral recovery programs. Attending and participating webinars on how to handle stress. (P2)
- For my personal mechanism, it is more on the aspect of engaging myself to further studies such as post graduate and doctoral. (P6)
- One of my coping mechanisms is to always look at the brighter side of the situations. Adapt the current trend and think of strategies that would fit in the situation. Attend in different training programs provided by DepEd for Teachers. (P8)

P2 mentioned that participating in programs for moral healing and in Participating in online seminars on how to deal with stress and attending those seminars were his coping mechanisms. P6 shared that regarding his own mechanism, it is more important that I commit himself to furthering his education by enrolling in postgraduate and doctorate programs. P8 added that one of the ways that he dealt with stressful situations was by trying to find the silver lining in every cloud. Adjust his actions to the pattern that is currently occurring and consider different tactics that would work well in this setting. Participate in the various training programs offered by the DepEd for the Teaching Staff.

This finding is supported by the notions of Sigue-Bisnar (2022) that DepEd may offer help to educators. To prepare their students for Education 4.0 in the digital age, teachers must also be technologically savvy. In addition to ensuring that faculty members receive regular and continuous learning opportunities and skill development aimed at enhancing their capacity to give effective in-person and virtual instruction, schools are also responsible for guaranteeing this. Unquestionably, private educational institutions must raise their expenditures on digital tools that faculty members must be adept with.

Further, as we gradually adjust to the new normal and move toward recovery from the terrible consequences of the epidemic, schools must remember that innovation is the way to go. Even though it is improbable that another pandemic of

the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic will ever hit the entire planet, it is best to be prepared. Schools may accomplish this by fostering a creative mindset and going above

and beyond to support teachers and students (Sigue-Bisnar, 2022).

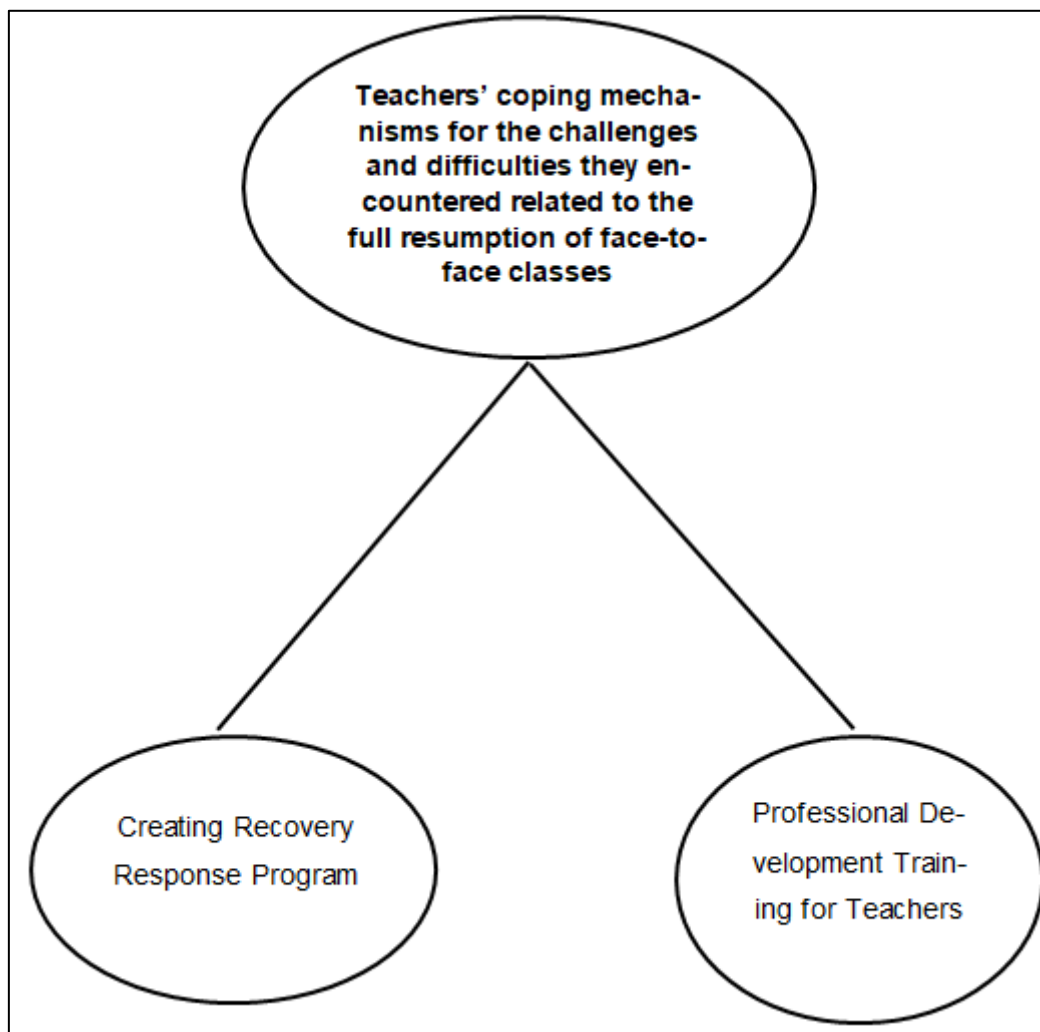


Fig 4. Teachers’ Coping Mechanisms for the Challenges and Difficulties they Encountered Related to the Full Resumption of Face-to-Face Classes

➤ *Educational Management Insights can be Drawn From the Experiences and Challenges of Public Secondary School Teachers*

The last research objective of this study focuses on the insights or lessons learned by public secondary school teachers in the full implementation of face-to-face classes in schools. Figure five (5) shows the summary of insights and lessons learned. Based on the experiences and challenges of the teacher-researchers in public elementary schools, they had their respective insights to further improve their experiences in the new normal. These insights were some of the personal thoughts of the participants that they deemed significant in understanding their real situations in schools.

As seen in Figure 5, the insights of the participants are divided into two major themes. These are adherence to safety protocols and the importance of blended learning. These summarized the insights of the teachers based on their experiences in the full implementation of face-to-face classes in schools including the challenges and coping mechanisms.

Based on their responses, although they experienced ups and downs in the process, still their insights have always reminded them of the lessons and things that they learned which made them more equipped and competent as new normal classroom teachers amidst the pandemic.

➤ *Adherence to Safety Protocols.*

People all around the country have increased their safety precautions ever since the COVID-19 outbreak first started. It is essential to continue taking these safety measures until the virus is brought under control and the right vaccine is developed that can protect everyone from contracting it. In schools, although teachers consider suffocations from wearing masks as a problem, they still follow the safety protocols and emphasize to the learners its importance. The participants further mentioned the importance of following the protocols as a habit. This theme as one of the insights or lessons learned was further emphasized by the secondary teachers in their statements.

My greatest lesson learned as a teacher in handling face-to-face despite the pandemic, is at all cost, keeping myself mentally, emotionally, physically strong. It is the only weapon to endure all challenges in this trying times. Schools must adhere to the safety protocols set by the Health Department so that all of can live safely and healthy. (P1)

We need to always have versatility, enthusiasm, obedience and patience. Follow the standards in schools and be proactive in making schools a safe space for everyone. (P3)

I've learned to adopt what are the needs and likes of the learners and taking into actions what could be the help I could extend to them. Teachers must emphasize the value of following health protocols in schools. (P4)

The participants of this study had given their respective insights in the implementation of face-to-face classes. P1 mentioned that the thing that has helped her the most as a teacher in dealing with face-to-face interactions despite the pandemic was to make sure that she maintain herself mentally, emotionally, and physically strong at all times. It is the only weapon that can withstand all of the obstacles that are being faced in these trying times. The guidelines for safety that have been established by the Health Department need to be followed in schools in order to ensure that everyone can enjoy a healthy and risk-free life. P3 considered always having versatility, eagerness, obedience, and patience which must be a part of teachers' makeup. Maintain the expectations set in schools and take the initiative to ensure that they are a secure environment for all students. P4 shared his learning that the skill of adapting his teaching to the preferences and requirements of the students he's working with, as well as taking into account how he may best assist them matter the most. The importance of adhering to established health procedures in schools should be emphasized by teachers.

The finding is related to the conceptualizations of Swartz (2021) states that school personnel must adhere to the COVID-19 safety requirements. According to the most recent CDC standards, everyone should wear a mask and workstations should always be at least three feet apart. Students should maintain a six-foot distance while not wearing masks, such as during lunch. Vaccinations are recommended but not necessary; currently, they are only administered to children 12 years of age and older. There is a current push for the majority of students to return to educational institutions across the nation, ideally with standard class sizes. If students are seated in rows in their classrooms, the possibilities of group work may be limited. During small-group instruction, it will be vital to ensure proper ventilation, and teachers will need to consider student safety while enabling cooperation or sharing of resources. Everyone must be reminded on the learning hat following protocols can make schools better and safer.

➤ *The Importance of Blended Learning Modality.*

The influence of digitalization on education had already manifested itself prior to the COVID-19 outbreak through the proliferation of online learning. However, the pandemic-induced lockdowns have propelled this trend into the mainstream, albeit with the exception of instances where the digital divide poses a hindrance, thereby necessitating remote learning for students. Following the initial wave of the pandemic, the educational sector encountered the task of preparing for the upcoming academic year. As a result, blended learning has emerged as a resolute commitment for both the present and future of education. In the study, participants learned the importance of blended learning. Blended learning offers several benefits, including enhanced student motivation and performance, increased participation, self-directed learning, and teamwork. It also facilitates novel modes of interaction between educators and learners, affords greater flexibility, and fosters the development of digital intelligence and the acquisition of digital skills.

The participants mentioned these further as a general concept by sharing their specific narratives in the following:

Lessen the loads of the teachers so that they can focus on the teaching and instructional access to the learners. If blended learning is possible, schools may be allowed to implement blended modality since this is already proven to be safe and effective. (P5)

My greatest learning about being a teacher handling face-to-face classes amidst Covid-19 pandemic is to be more understanding to your learners who have different personalities because whether we let it or not student's behavior and performances will really test you to the highest level. Further, different modalities helped us get rid of the virus so if cases of Covid 19 will rise again, blended modality is the solution. (P6)

As part of their insights, participant 5 mentioned reducing the burden on educators to enable them to concentrate on providing instruction and facilitating access to learning for students. The implementation of blended learning in schools may be deemed feasible, given its established safety and efficacy, thereby allowing for its adoption as a viable modality. P6 shared that one significant insight gained from teaching face-to-face classes during the Covid-19 pandemic is the importance of demonstrating greater empathy towards students with diverse personalities. Despite our best efforts, student behavior and academic performance can be challenging and may require us to rise to the occasion. Moreover, the implementation of diverse modalities has facilitated the eradication of the virus. Therefore, in the event of a resurgence of Covid-19 cases, a blended modality approach would be a viable solution.

The result is related to the findings of Singh (2017) that through hybrid and blended training, students can experience face-to-face and online learning, as well as scheduled and self-paced coursework. This style of instruction has the potential to become the norm because it allows teachers to reinvent and modify content, especially in fields where instructors have struggled to provide students with an engag-

ing online learning experience. Change is accompanied by questions in every field. As we prepare to teach in a post-vaccine and post-pandemic world, there is a clear need for research demonstrating the experiences of teachers, the effectiveness of blended and hybrid instruction, and how teachers might design classrooms to make it a viable option for the present and future.

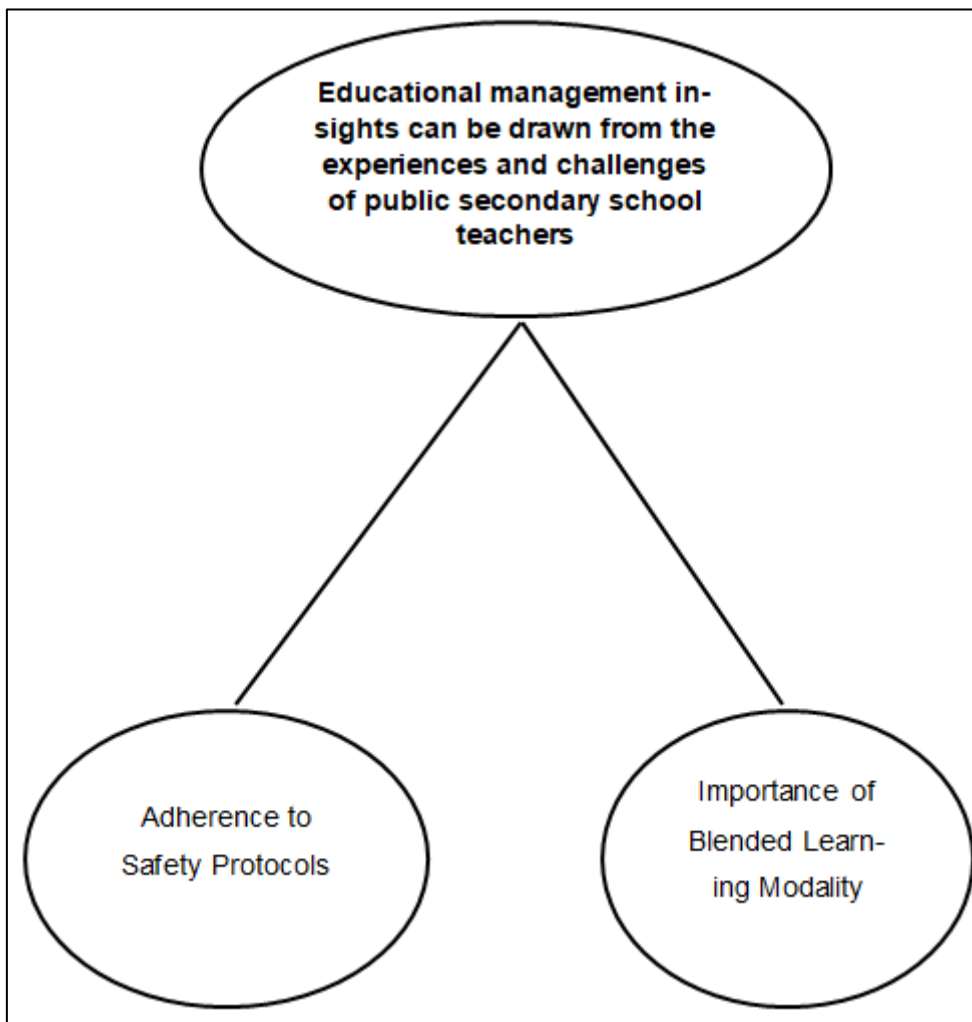


Fig 5. Educational Management Insights Drawn from the Experiences and Challenges of Elementary School Teachers. in Handling Bullying Issues in the Classroom

VIII. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this chapter, the summary of the study is presented, from the summary of the findings, I drew the implications and future directions. The purpose of my study was to find out the lived experiences, challenges encountered, coping mechanisms and insights of teachers on their management strategies in the full implementation of face-to-face classes in public secondary schools. The participants were coming from Cogon National High School of the Island Garden City of Samal Division (IGACOS), Region XI.

To accomplish the research objectives, I employed a qualitative phenomenological approach incorporating thematic analysis. In accordance with Cresswell's (2006) recommendations, open-ended interview queries were used to

gain an authentic understanding of people's experiences. In addition, I encouraged my interviewees to discuss freely and explicitly their own definition or interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation, which were the experiences of secondary school teachers in their implementation of face-to-face classes in schools.

A. Findings

Based on the results of the thematic analysis of the responses from the teacher participants, the following themes were revealed.

The lived experiences of public secondary school teachers in the full implementation of face-to-face classes can be summed up in (3) major themes. These are: focusing on learners' interpersonal skills, teaching with limitations

and hurdling work fatigues. There were three sub-themes that emerged from the challenges or work fatigue by the participants. These are heavy additional workloads, interactions hindered by protocols and the obvious learning gaps. The two coping mechanisms of teachers as participants in the challenges they experienced were creating recovery programs and professional development training for teachers in the new normal. The two educational management insights drawn from the participants were adherence to safety protocols and the importance of blended learning.

B. Implications

The results of my analysis revealed the following significant findings.

The lived experiences of public secondary school teachers who were involved in the complete implementation of face-to-face sessions may be characterized as novel effort in bringing back the usual classroom set-up but this time, enhanced and modified just to continue giving quality educational experiences to the learners in schools. These principles can be utilized to characterize their lived experiences in schools. The implementation of face-to-face sessions in these classes was made possible with the participation and cooperation of the public-school teachers. They served as the prime mover or the front liners in the field of education. Teachers put an emphasis on the learners' interpersonal skills as an important characteristic that teachers must develop. At present, teachers are instructing or giving lessons under circumstances where there are limited resources and hurdling the effects of job stress in the new normal.

The difficulties and challenges that are caused by job stress and burnout which were broken down and related over the course of the study that took place in the participant's learning stations. This results in learning gaps that are easily observable among students, significant additional burdens or tasks that made teachers to experience more stress, and school activities and processes that are hampered by strict guidelines and procedures.

The building of rehabilitation programs to emotionally, academically, and holistically help learners bridge their learning gaps and the provision of professional development training for teachers within the framework of the new normal were the main coping strategies that teachers employed as participants in the issues they encountered. These coping mechanisms were utilized by teachers as a means of coping with the difficulties they experienced. Both methods of coping were made possible by the shift and adaptation to what is in the new normal. The need for integrated learning and the necessity of rigorously adhering to the procedures that have been set for safety were the two most essential lessons for educational management that could be learned from the participants in the study.

The findings of this study shed light on the various experiences of public secondary school teachers in discerning their management strategies in their teaching and learning processes in the new normal. The study looked into the educators' actions and reactions. These experiences, acquired

through systematic interviews, can help other educators interested in the phenomenon under study, as well as other scholars pursuing comparable lines of study. Participants' coping techniques can be used as a resource for those who find themselves in a similar position.

C. Future Directions

Based on the findings of the study, it is important that the results are properly relayed and used by the significant people whom this research was intended for.

The Department of Education may review its guidelines or rules to improve face to face classes as a modality and mechanism in schools in the new normal.

The government especially the health agencies to review teachers and learners activities in schools where Covid-19 protocols hinder quality teaching and learning processes. They may come up with safe mechanisms and at the same time healthy for all school individuals involved in the educative processes.

Division officials, District Supervisors, School administrators and heads may encourage and support their teachers by reviewing their workloads and by supporting their efforts to address learning gaps in schools. They may also implement a comprehensive program or capacity building and professional development to help teachers to be effective and efficient in the full implementation of face-to-face classes and alternative modalities in schools.

Schools and teachers may create activities and contextualized remediation programs for the learners to minimize or eradicate learning gaps.

Future researchers may embark on the same research with different participants, places, and schools. Other avenues not scrutinized in this research may also be explored.

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