"My job as a teacher literally never stops": How Filipino women teachers coped during the Covid-19 pandemic

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In 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic affected the whole world, particularly in the education sector as schools were closed and social distancing applied as control measures. Nevertheless, teaching and learning continued, overcoming diverse challenges and adopting various coping mechanisms, as examined in this phenomenological research into the personal experiences of forty-two women teachers in public high schools in Bataan, Philippines during June-November 2021. The challenges noted included using the same space for multiple roles; undefined work hours; high workloads; students' diverse contexts; and lack of control in quality of learning delivery, quality of support from educational leaders, and health risks in delivery/retrieval of modules. The coping mechanisms included hiring help; prioritising workloads; blending work; separating home and workspace; upskilling through self-learning or training; collaborating with colleagues; employing flexible processes; and investing in resources. This study suggests that the most pressing needs of teachers for coping with current teaching and learning in Covid-19 pandemic circumstances are provision of quality resources; creation of policy that will improve balancing of workload; designing flexible and equitable work assignments; improving health protection, and being supportive for work-life blends.

Introduction

January 2020 struck frightening history in today's world when the World Health Organization reported a new genome of coronavirus known as SARS CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2). Today, all people in the world have been affected by the coronavirus 2019 or COVID-19. In the education sector, the teaching-learning process was affected as schools were closed and social distancing protocols were mandated.

This phenomenological study depicts the challenges and coping mechanisms for public high school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines. This research examined the personal experiences of 42 female public high school teachers in Science, Math, English, Social Studies, Filipino, and Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health (MAPEH), as narrated by themselves. Female teachers are the focus of this investigation because women carry not only a regular workload but also the so-called "second shift" or "double burden" even before the pandemic. The term "double burden" or "second shift" (Hochschild, 2012) describes the workload of persons (usually women) who are working in paid jobs while also undertaking a major part of unpaid care work.

The Philippines, despite its pose of gender equality through its *Magna Carta for Women*, a wide-ranging women's human rights law that aims to abolish discrimination by recognising, protecting, fulfilling, and promoting the rights of Filipino women, has still left to consider that professional women play multiple roles in Filipino society (Bongco & Abesamis, 2019).

Adding to this difficult situation, women in the Philippines are also held responsible for domestic work and child caring responsibilities. While the term "double burden" is frequently raised in debates about women's work and family roles, our understanding of these challenges is still inadequate, particularly in the context of developing countries and transitional economies which leads to a blurring of work and home settings (Chen, 2018; Clark et al., 2020; Jakubowski & Sitko-Dominik, 2021). Cases where women are empowered with economic independence by having paid jobs still pose great challenges, because they must endure the double burden of working for paid jobs while being responsible for home duties (Xhaho, 2020; Lavado et al., 2022). This burden is especially difficult in the case of work as a classroom teacher (Naqvi & Zehra, 2020; Kulal & Nayak, 2020). Thus, providing support and motivation befitting for a pandemic situation is essential (Basilaia & Kvavadze 2020; Naqvi & Zehra 2020; Dweikat & Zyoud, 2021), to ensure teachers' sound mental health (Ozamiz-Etxebarria, 2021; Casanova et al., 2022, Quansah et al., 2022).

Focusing on the Philippines, wherein female teachers are the majority, studies have highlighted that more research must be conducted to assess online learning systems, including planning and implementation mechanisms, community assessment, revision of curricula, and custom-fitting of instructional materials to new learning modalities (Alvarez, 2020; Toquero, 2020; Tria, 2021). This study focuses on these gaps in knowledge, with particular reference to challenges and coping mechanisms for female public high school teachers.

Method

This study has employed descriptive phenomenology (Creswell, 2013; Cohen et al. 2018) to develop meanings from each individual's experience, in this case during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study also considered the trustworthiness (Elo et al. 2014; Nowell et al. 2017) of the research principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For the credibility of the data gathered, referential adequacy is well-taken along the course of the study. After data analysis and theme development, archived data was reconsidered to test the initially gathered themes. The research entailed thick descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to achieve external validity through a sufficient and detailed description of experiences. An audit trail was also conducted for a transparent description of research procedure undertaken from beginning to development and reporting of findings.

Data collection

Participants were individually interviewed via *Google Meet* at their most convenient time, with durations 50 to 70 minutes. Prior to interview commencing, the objectives of the study were explained, along with a previously signed informed consent. Each participant was free to withdraw from the interview at any time. The semi-structured interviews focused on three main questions: "What are the challenges that you experience in teaching at home during the pandemic?"; "What are your coping mechanisms to teach in this pandemic?"; and "What are your recommendations to improve the current situation of

teaching?" The questions were asked in Filipino language, and the responses were translated into English after coding. Participants' answers were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Prior to thematic analysis, a copy of each individual's transcript was sent to the participant for review and approval.

Sample

This study used a purposive sampling method, but the participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. The inclusion criteria specified female teachers in public high schools in the province of Bataan, Philippines, in the areas of Science, Math, Social Studies, English, Filipino, and Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH); at least five years teaching experience; and have taught their subjects for at least three years before the pandemic and one year during the pandemic. The female teachers were co-residing with a partner and with one, two or three children in ages one to four years. All participants were anonymised and were assigned code numbers. Appendix 1 presents a demographics table. The data collected from the interviews were classified as confidential, so the audio interviews were deleted after transcription, and the lead researcher was the only one who had access to the entire file compilation.

Data analysis

The responses of forty-two participants were sorted and analysed in a three-phase thematic analysis. Open coding was initially done on the data collected, and significant statements for coding were identified. Clustering of open codes into categories was based on emerging patterns followed by the generation of themes. The data gathered were analysed with *QDA Miner* software [https://provalisresearch.com/products/qualitative-data-analysis-software/].

Responses obtained from participants were initially sorted out into words and sentences. These analytic units were identified and coded. After that, codes were entwined and linked with each other to form the themes. The subsequent themes and codes were tabulated with their frequencies to enhance data precision.

Findings and discussion

This study deduced the following themes concerning the challenges facing female teachers.

Same space for multiple roles

The blend of domestic and productive roles in a shared space is taxing for teachers, not only physically but also emotionally. One participant said that:

> Because of the pandemic, it has been very difficult for me to work while taking care of my children. There were times when I needed to carry my young child while holding my mobile phone to respond to students' inquiries or work on my laptop and leave my child in the walker. It is strenuous to be a teacher and a mother at the same time, particularly

> when you are at home. There are instances when school reports and meetings must be attended to while taking care of the children. No matter how I try to focus, it is burdensome for my mind and body. (Teacher 18)

From the narratives of 42 female teachers, it can be inferred that women still play multiple roles where they must sacrifice their personal time to accommodate all the requirements of being a working parent. Bongco and Abenes (2019) explained that even in the teaching profession, where there is a perceived dominance of women, female teachers are still in a position where their multiple roles seem to clash. Despite the perceived gender equality, they are expected to go beyond maternal duties (Serra-Labrador, 2022). Hence, devotion towards family is a strong commitment that holds back female teachers from maximising their potential to grow as professionals.

In blended-flexible learning, it is important that gender roles be taken into consideration, as women play a major role as caretakers of children and other family members. Simply put, mothers devote more time to childcare. Staying at home requires more cleaning and meal preparation, which cannot be done by anyone else (Augustus, 2021). In effect, parents who stayed at home with their children had lower well-being, particularly women with young children, so it is critical that public policy be ratified immediately to halt the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on family well-being, with a focus on child development and parental productivity (Huebener, 2021), and reducing the widening gender gaps (Biroli et al. 2020; Power, 2020).

Undefined hours

Teachers' work hours at home and in school are not well defined, so it is improbable to have a definitive schedule of activities. For instance, work is not limited to 8 am to 5 pm because of the demand for constant connection with students, parents, and school supervisors. Consequently, work is defined by the sleep and mood of kids, which is not exactly on a fixed schedule. One participant explained that:

> In this pandemic work set-up, my job as a teacher literally never stops, and that is the biggest challenge that we are facing right now. I work round the clock because I need to answer student questions and try to tend to their needs every time. It is tough on my part, especially when students send messages late at night when we are about to sleep. This kind of situation affects my time at home since there were no specific boundaries on time. (Teacher 36)

Teachers in this pandemic work whenever they can, at any time of day when circumstances allow, putting additional strain on their minds (Biroli et al., 2021; Bleck & Lipowsky, 2022; Lizana et al., 2021; Serra-Labrador, 2022). Reputable researchers have cited the negative effects of same-space and undefined hours of work on female teachers as the borderline between work and family life becomes unclear (Jakubowski & Sitko-Dominik, 2021; Rawal, 2021; Vargas-Rubilar & Oros, 2021). Apart from the worsening state of women's well-being, long hours of work are also associated with less motivation to work and other stress-related issues. Greater attention must be allotted to teachers' mental health and all-embracing research on technology enhancement must be done to

alleviate the burden upon teachers working at home (Ross-Hain, 2020; Casanova et al., 2022; Kotowski et al., 2022). School leaders must review these scenarios in developing programs and work-schedules for teachers in both traditional and blended teaching (Lizana & Vega-Fernadez, 2021). School leaders may also consider new work hours or fewer work hours for women who are providing childcare (Augustus, 2021).

Extensive workload

The new normal set-up has extensive demands on teachers in terms of materials preparation, rating of papers, and paperwork, among others. Two of the participants quoted:

> Checking of modules these days is very laborious compared to face-to-face classes. When we are inside the classroom, we can immediately check the paper with the students. For instance, I have five hundred students. I have to check all their outputs; I also need to record them all. (Teacher 34)

> As a mother, I regularly check papers from nine pm to twelve midnight only, I set this time for myself because my baby usually wakes up at three to four am. I am still breastfeeding, so if I continue working up until morning, I will be exhausted from lack of sleep. (Teacher 04)

Being a mother and teacher all in one home becomes tough for teachers in this pandemic due to the massive volume of work required from them in both schoolwork and household chores. Today, teachers perceive that there has been a major increase in workload due to the remote learning setup, especially for women (Aperribai, et. al., 2020, Lantsoght et al., 2021). They have reported that lesson planning, delivering lessons, and checking of outputs are more time-consuming now than in face-to-face teaching (Johnson & Coleman, 2021). Because of this, teachers have shown a high incidence of anxiety, depression, and stress symptoms since the pandemic began (Rabacal et al., 2020, Ozamiz-Etxebarria, 2021, Quansah et al., 2022). It can be resolved that the curriculum must be reviewed to focus on the most essential learning competencies, along with the improvement of school practices that will lighten the load of teachers (Toquero, 2020; Lizana & Vega-Fernadez, 2021). Class size must be reduced to lessen the teacher's time spent on checking students' output. Education leaders can also evaluate the school forms being submitted by teachers, as they mostly describe the forms as 'too numerous' or 'too much' workload that it occupies more of their time than preparing for the essential part of teaching.

Students' diverse contexts

Teaching these days is challenging because teachers must consider different student contexts of students in socio-economic status, geographical location, available support, and activities (Baloran, 2020). This diversity requires differentiation and flexibility. Two participants emphasised that:

> Before the beginning of classes, I do simple survey to schedule time for Google Meet or Zoom synchronous meetings. Whoever has a mobile load or Internet connection, can

attend the class, but not everyone can attend the synchronous class because not all of them have access to the Internet or have money for mobile data. Those who cannot attend, I send them personal messages via free messaging platform for consultation. (Teacher 39)

Although I can teach students via free messaging applications, other students really do not have access to computers or even mobile devices. Some of my students also work for a living to help support their families financially during this pandemic, so they often read the modules late or submit output beyond the schedule. I try to understand them because they are living tough and impoverished lives. (Teacher 29)

Despite teachers' efforts, students felt that face-to-face teaching cannot be replaced by online classes, particularly modular learning (Kulal & Nayak, 2020; Tsegay et al., 2022), because the varying contexts for students affects their learning when delivered through online platforms. Student interpretations of teacher text messages may lead to disengagement. As the COVID-19 pandemic forced the curriculum online, students and teachers maintained physical distance and mostly relied on screen space on devices for teaching-learning, where the dialogical encounters are missing, which seemingly 'technologise' students (Pacheco, 2020). Another problem is that teachers are trained to address students' needs and deliver instructions in-person, and though they have limited experience supporting learning through new pedagogies in the context of a pandemic, they must continue with blended and flexible learning (Coman, et al., 2020). To support this, quality training must be conducted to adapt the pedagogies of teachers to the needs of the students (Talahiban et al., 2022).

Lack of control in quality of learning delivery

Many aspects of learning are beyond the teacher's control, and it leads to teachers' guilt. These limitations could be due to the mode of delivery or level of engagement of the students. Two of the participants stated:

I cannot express myself completely as a teacher, like in the classroom where I teach with facial expressions, body language, and even hand gestures. Even though I am creating video lectures to substitute for face-to-face teaching, I cannot say that it can replace face-to-face teaching because the modular and online approach lacks personal attributes. (Teacher 06)

Coming from face-to-face teaching to modular distance learning is indeed tough, but learning is possible. The main challenge is that explaining complex concepts to students in real-time is not possible in this teaching-learning set-up. I cannot answer their inquiries immediately like inside the classroom. Assessments are also quite questionable because we cannot monitor them as they answer the quizzes and activities. (Teacher 23)

While teachers make their best effort to maintain the quality of education by guarding the integrity of assessments and encouraging academic honesty, this area remains problematic (Agayon et al., 2022; Besonia & Magnate, 2022; Caratiquit & Caratiquit, 2022). As noted in Johnson & Coleman (2021), there were schools that tried digital assessments which led to varying success due to concerns about fairness and validity. Proficiency in technology

skills, as well as the level of access to technology, is not the same for all students. Hence, the teacher's competencies, both in pedagogy and technology, must be strengthened as the shift from the usual classroom instructions into virtual classrooms continues. This can be done by quality provision of technology and training to keep up with the pandemic situation and continue to provide quality education (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). And, because teachers' skill sets may be unsuitable for blended learning, it is necessary to train teachers for better adaptation to online environments to assist them in better interacting with students through the new learning platforms (Coman et al., 2020, Talahiban et al., 2022).

Quality of support

Teachers are also challenged with the quality of support they receive from educational leaders in terms of resources, assignments, and policies. For instance, there are policies that focus too much on students' rights and overemphasise the teacher's accountability on situations that are difficult to control. Two participants said that:

> Teachers are required to produce modules immediately, and because we lack funds and resources, we must strategise on how to reproduce modules for the students. We take turns in using printers that are available, so we work overtime. We even ought to be extremely cautious in using the paper, printing on both sides carefully, because supplies are insufficient. (Teacher 24)

> We must create our own materials, some of the available materials in the Learning Resources Management and Development System (LRMDS) are outdated, so we create new ones for ourselves. There are limited resources available for teachers to use. (Teacher 29)

Since the pandemic suddenly hit the world, school leadership along with the policies came unprepared for the call to continue the teaching-learning process (Asio & Bayucca, 2021, Tri Sakti et al., 2022). Hence, education leaders must respond promptly and with prudence and thorough understanding of choices, outcomes, and possible effects of each decision. Although it is difficult to foresee the solutions to the problems of these times, education leaders must take caution as there are no certain guidelines to leading the schools during this pandemic (Netolicky, 2020). Additionally, school leadership changed markedly due to Covid-19, thus context responsive leadership was needed as schools shifted to new practices due to the pandemic. To operate effectively in these trying times goes beyond usual problem-solving or 'band-aid' solutions, educational leaders must engage in persistent crisis management techniques involving cooperation and supportive systems from all stakeholders (Islam, et al. 2021, Fermin et al., 2022). Changes during a pandemic are so unusual that it requires a high level of trust to unite everyone and address the concerns cooperatively as they happen (Harris & Jones, 2020; Quansah et al., 2022).

Health risks

Teachers are challenged with risks to their health in delivery and retrieval of modules.

> The most challenging part for me is the module distribution because it is very risky, although we are afraid of doing it, we do not have any choice but to perform our duty as teachers. We must deliver the modules and retrieve the answers sheets. I do not have a problem with teaching, the problem is that this pandemic restricted mobility, and going outside threatens our health and family. (Teacher 07)

Due to the threats of Covid-19, teachers felt worried and anxious about the new normal setup, especially on sanitation and physical distancing (Agayon et al., 2022). Policymakers must consider the approaches, experiences and perceptions of teachers when developing teacher professional development and action plans for future emergencies. (An, et al., 2021, Lagat, 2021, Tri Sakti et al., 2022). Although the Department of Health has minimum health protocols, specific guidelines on teachers' mobility must be implemented

The following are the themes deduced from the collected data on how female teachers cope with teaching at home amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, including: getting help; prioritising; blending; and separating.

Getting help

Teachers who have hired help or have the support of their family (immediate or extended) have an easier time managing the demands of the new set-up. Two participants stressed that:

> I needed to hire a house helper because I cannot attend to all the household chores while working at home, in this way I can be productive in my work as a teacher but still attend to my children's needs during breaks. (Teacher 21)

> I hired a stay-in Nanny to help me take care of my child, she can take a break when it is school break, but during school days I certainly need to have a helper because I cannot attend to all the needs of my child while teaching online. (Teacher 05)

In the Philippines, having a house helper is a common practice, particularly for working mothers. The case is different due to the pandemic as the participants are apprehensive about hiring help, fearing infection from the additional person in the home. Despite this, working mothers may be left with no choice but to hire help because they are laden with excessive workloads in school. This would mean additional expense for the family and acceptance of risks it posed. Childcare stipends and/or childcare support can be considered by the government to provide for this specific need from female teachers (Lantsoght et al., 2021).

Prioritising

Some teachers manage workload by scheduling activities based on their priorities. This could be based on their availability, values, needs or deadlines. One participant narrated that:

> I always see to it that all household chores are done according to schedule, including cooking food, ironing and washing clothes, and cleaning. All the tasks I need to do must

be completed according to my schedule. I prioritise schoolwork during the day when the kids are sleeping or playing. When urgent submission [reports or paperwork] is needed, I leave some scheduled tasks and focus on more urgent ones. (Teacher 28)

In a society where mothers have an ideal image of being caring and nurturing for children and home, it is difficult, if not impossible, to get away from the notion that women are homemakers before they are teachers (Serra-Labrador, 2022). As a result, women tend to prioritise motherhood duties to realise an idealised role of women at home (Collins et al., 2020; Lutter & Schröder, 2020). In this case, the *Magna Carta for Women* must require fewer work hours, to compensate for childcare or housework.

Blending

Teachers adapt by blending the work at home and at school through multitasking. One participant explained that:

> As a teacher and mother at the same time during this work from home set-up, there has been a great adjustment for me in terms of time management. I must balance teacher duties to best perform my responsibilities while keeping up with the demands of being a mother, as a homemaker. I constantly remind myself that even at home, I must perform all required school tasks because I am a teacher. (Teacher 33)

Multitasking is the keyword for female teachers during a pandemic because there is no definite separation between school and housework. Teachers try to keep up with the demands at home and school all at the same time. A practice that might not be easy, but as the participants narrated, something that women are already used to. This women's crisis can be alleviated in ways that can be equitable, such as reducing the higher demands upon female teachers, assessing their most essential resources, providing balanced workload, and promoting home life and mental health (Robinson et al., 2022; Stengard, et al. 2022).

Separating

Teachers attempt to separate home and work either by allotting space (e.g. having a separate room for work) or a different time (e.g. working at night) for the activity. One participant emphasised that:

> Having a small workspace for schoolwork is one of the adjustments that I have to do, apart from working until late at night up to early morning, especially when there is too much paperwork to submit, I also have to use all the free time I have to deliver all school requirements. (Teacher 10)

A majority of the participants reported that their home space is limited, so allotting personal workspace is a luxury that became a necessity. A separate space is needed to avoid the children and the household chores which are ever present in the eyes of a mother. Thus, it would be of great help to teachers if classes could be limited to 25-35 students to reduce the time for preparation, checking of outputs and monitoring of students (An et al., 2021).

The following are the themes deduced from the collected data on how female teachers cope with work from home, including: upskilling; communicating with parents and students; collaborating; approaching teaching with a heart; flexibility and quality; personal investment; and reducing effort.

Upskilling

Teachers upskill themselves through self-learning or training to adapt to the demands of the new normal education (e.g., new approaches and use of technology). Two of the participants said:

> I studied all the new learning modalities like Google Classroom, Zoom and others. Before I am not so familiar with Google Classroom but is now getting-by well, we are accustomed with integrating technologies like LCD, videos, and PowerPoint presentations which I also update to suit online platforms. (Teacher 19)

> I attended training and seminars online that would capacitate me with the new learning modalities particularly Zoom and Google Classroom. While applying these new learnings, I often ask my co-teachers if I get lost in using these platforms and many of them, especially the young ones are always willing to help. (Teacher 14)

Teachers amidst this pandemic were resourceful and committed to their profession as they sought to improve their skills for the abrupt shift to blended flexible learning (Bravo et al., 2021). To cope, teachers equipped themselves with proper digital skills and e-learning platforms to handle online classes (Al-Rashidi, 2022; Rashid et al., 2021; Talahiban et al., 2022). Although some had hesitations about integrating technology into the classroom because of their motivational factors, mindsets, expertise, and self-ability in using these technologies (Klapproth, et al., 2020), a study in the Philippines found that science teachers were well equipped for online teaching and learning. Teachers equipped themselves professionally by attending webinars, learning several online platforms, and concentrating on the most essential competencies. However, their Internet connectivity must be improved, and devices upgraded (Arrieta, et al., 2020).

While online teaching-learning comes in a wide range of forms, with many technology platforms such as learning management systems, broadcasting and social media, student-teacher interactions will lead to a different education online. Hence, there is no single description of online education (Zhao, 2020). Teachers and policymakers must accept that learning new skills in times of pandemic is inevitable. Maximising the potential for adapting to a new normal in education is critical (Garg et al., 2020; Corpuz, 2021). Thus, new policies are necessary for blended and flexible learning to be implemented in general to support these conditions of teaching and learning (Fermin, et al., 2022).

Communicating with parents and students

Teachers used different media to communicate with parents and students for motivation, encouragement, guidance, etc. This could be done through personal communication in the

release of modules; distance communication through SMS, voice calls, chat, video calls; or feedback in rated outputs. One participant narrated that:

> The role of teachers in these times of pandemic is overwhelming because students rely heavily on teachers to learn. Although teachers have limitations in imparting knowledge to students due to lack of Internet access, we teachers still do our best to communicate with them, like sending messages via free online platforms, sending text messages, and calling their parents. Acting as a moderator or facilitator of learning is the best word that describes our role as teachers these days. When parents get a module for their children, we ask about their children and how they get along with the module. (Teacher 02)

To cope with the new normal setup, teachers tend to adopt new communication platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Microsoft Teams to connect with the students and parents to deliver lessons in every way possible (Dweikat & Zyoud, 2021; Besonia & Magnate, 2022). This was not an easy task as it can lead to technostress that has a negative impact upon teacher's work performance (Cahapay & Bangoc, 2021; Nang et al., 2022). Additionally, many students still have no access to technology, weak skills in the use of technology, some lack participation and engagement, along with weak parental support (An, et al., 2021), that leaves teachers with an ever-challenging role as facilitator of learning.

Collaborating

Teachers collaborated with colleagues for efficient work and mutual learning. One participant said:

> I am delighted that I learned new learning platforms with the help of my co-teachers who are more knowledgeable in online platform, they are very helpful and kind. For instance, I am not well-versed with Google Forms and how I can use it in making quizzes, I simply asked my co-teacher and she guided me on how to use it (also via online), thus we learn much from each other. (Teacher 03)

Building relationships online with colleagues is one positive result of the pandemic (Arbiol, et al., 2022; Al-Rashidi, 2022, Caratiquit & Caratiquit, 2022). Participants delightedly narrated that they build good relationships with other teachers especially those who were more knowledgeable about online learning and teaching. Robosa et al. (2021) and Al-Rashidi (2022) reported that despite the challenges of limited resources and excessive workloads, teachers still felt optimistic because they were able to build harmonious relationships with colleagues and fulfil their duties passionately. It is safe to say that collaborations amongst resilient and creative teachers were highlighted in this study.

Approaching teaching with a heart

That is, considering the students' circumstances may be a personal initiative fuelled by empathy. This could also be mandated by the school heads. Empathy is exercised in different ways, such as leniency in rating or reduction of activities. One participant explained that:

> Before the pandemic, I was very strict when it came to the submission of school requirements, but when this pandemic arose, I became more considerate. This is also one of the instructions to us from the Division Office, to have more heart for students because we are all going through tough times. We put up a group chat so we can communicate easily. Here we can easily send announcements and information, or when students have problems, they can contact us. This is particularly difficult for grade seven students because they are still young, so communication is necessary and extending these efforts to parents is also important. (Teacher 37)

Problems and difficulties in online assessments have been reported during the pandemic. This can lead schools and policymakers to enhance the quality of online education by embracing the latest instructional approaches while providing continuous training for teachers (Kamal & Illiyan, 2021). Since teachers, despite any situation, will remain resilient and steadfast (Matiz et al., 2020; Lagat, 2021; Mostajo, et al., 2022) hence translating challenges into opportunities for improvement (Jamon et al., 2021). But romanticising teachers' resilience is not a sound call for quality education. Despite teachers' compassion not to burden the students with many school requirements, a thorough review of essential skills and competencies that students must acquire is necessary.

Flexibility and quality

Teachers employ flexible processes to maintain the quality of education in different ways. For instance, they try to maintain the integrity of assessment despite the challenges of academic dishonesty. One participant shared:

> I try to give my best effort to teach them. I prepare video lectures and performance-based assessments so I can truly measure their learning despite the situation in this pandemic. Although it is tough to say that the grades exactly reflect the learning because the teacher is not physically monitoring the students, we have to continue serving with our utmost effort while expecting little less from them. (Teacher 01)

Despite the challenges teachers are facing, most of them are generally delighted with the new learning and experiences they have gained. Thus, it can be surmised that the pandemic situation uplifted the resilience and ingenuity of teachers, in consonance with Naqvi and Zehra (2020) and Mostajo et al. (2022), where teachers showed high levels of creativity amidst crises. Arrieta et al. (2020) and Kumar et al. (2021) emphasised that flexibility in the curriculum can be done by selecting the most essential learning competencies, while inquiry-based learning, feedback, and creativity can be done through online platforms and applications.

Personal investment

Teachers invest personally in the resources they need to deliver learning in the new normal. For instance, they buy laptops, install Internet connections, or use their personal printers to produce modules.

> I bought a new laptop with higher specifications so I can cope with the demands of online teaching. It is an investment because it can make my work easier. I also asked my husband to apply for a faster Internet connection so I can better communicate with students, co-teachers, and supervisors. (Teacher 05)

To safeguard teaching-learning quality, infrastructure, facilities, training, and proper implementation of strategic plans must be conducted (Dayagbil et al., 2021; Khanal, 2021, Robinson et al., 2022), wherein the institution works in its utmost capacity to provide the necessary equipment (Caratiquit & Caratiquit, 2022) and skills to teachers who facilitate and secure the education of the next generation. These are the resounding findings of this study, which policymakers might want to consider as the government and various stakeholders move forward for quality education in the country.

Reducing effort

Another adjustment teachers make is to exert less effort in their work. They may tend to focus more on domestic roles rather than teaching, where several issues are beyond their control, these frustrations somewhat lead to circumvention towards household activities.

> At the start of the pandemic, I asked the students to complete all the activities in the module, but it was difficult for them to do so every day, and checking was also difficult, so selecting the most important activities was a better option. After deciding on this mechanism, which is during the second grading period, I noticed that students adapted better to this system because they were submitting output on time and with better quality. (Teacher 15)

To cope with the pandemic situation female teachers with young children opted to disengage, deny, and conserve energy (Aldossari & Chaudhry, 2020) because they are considerably more exhausted than males (Oducado, et al., 2021). Hence, looking after their mental health through wellness programs is important (Matiz, et al., 2020; Bleck & Lipowsky, 2022). None of the participants mentioned basic mental wellness programs in the entire province. This issue must be taken seriously as the quality of education might collapse should teachers begin to disengage from teaching due to exhaustion (Kotowski et al., 2022).

Conclusion

This study surmised that most of the challenges arose from the abrupt change of teaching-learning environments, which forced the teachers to shift from the usual face-to-face classes to a blended mode of learning that is both modular and online learning platforms, in a work from home setup.

Educational leaders seemingly overlooked the situation of female teachers adjusting to the unforeseen changes in the teaching-learning setup brought by the pandemic; a situation that resulted in teachers' excessive workloads while performing home duties, as they were constrained to working at home, the same place where their home duties are always present.

Despite the situation, teacher resilience was exceptionally recognised where they directly combatted the challenges by working on their own initiatives to strengthen skills, tighten schedules, and even spend their own money to better cope with the demands of the new teaching-learning setup due to the pandemic.

Thus, it is essential that educational institutions and policymakers collaborate to enhance the quality of online teaching by improving basic infrastructure and Internet connectivity to reduce difficulties among female teachers. The quality of technology training for teachers to deliver online classes must be strengthened to increase acceptance and integration of online education as a teaching and learning mode. Moreover, female teachers were also forced to extend 'considerations' to students, so the jargon "gamitin ang puso" (use the heart) became a prevalent expression; a situation that caused some distress for teachers who believe they were overburdened with expectations.

It has been evident that protecting the mental health of teachers is vital to safeguarding the well-being of both the students and the quality of teaching. Because the demarcation between family life and professional work became distorted due to the same space for these roles, the overall well-being of teachers became impaired, thus requiring new support mechanisms. Although the government is trying its best to keep up with the changes in the teaching-learning process because of Covid-19, by providing learning materials, electronic devices, and training for teachers, the aspect of being a 'female' in the context of Filipino culture seems to be overlooked.

Staying at home while taking care of young children and teaching at the same time is not an easy task for the female teachers who, despite all the challenges, are finding the best coping mechanisms to still deliver their best version of quality education to the students who, according to them, are the spring of their devotion.

Perhaps, in these times of pandemic, educational leaders must take a stand regarding the human rights of students as being equal to the human rights of the profession's dominant population, female teachers - who are not only professional teachers but also mothers, wives, and homemakers.

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Appendix1: Participants' demographics

Code (pseudonym)	Subject area	Years teaching experience	No. of children	Average class size
1	Math	11	2	50
2	Math	10	2	50
3	Math	10	2	50
4	Math	5	2	50
5	Math	9	2	50
6	Math	7	2	50
7	Math	8	1	50
8	English	12	2	50
9	English	7	1	50
10	English	7	2	50
11	English	15	1	50

12	English	8	1	50
13	English	7	1	50
14	English	8	3	50
15	Filipino	11	1	50
16	Filipino	7	1	50
17	Filipino	8	2	50
18	Filipino	10	3	50
19	Filipino	7	2	50
20	Filipino	13	2	50
21	Filipino	7	1	50
22	MAPEH	7	3	50
23	MAPEH	11	2	50
24	MAPEH	10	3	50
25	MAPEH	5	1	50
26	MAPEH	6	1	50
27	MAPEH	7	2	50
28	MAPEH	5	1	50
28	Social Studies	6	2	50
30	Social Studies	9	3	50
31	Social Studies	8	3	50
32	Social Studies	5	2	50
33	Social Studies	6	2	50
34	Social Studies	7	2	50
35	Social Studies	5	1	50
36	Science	6	1	50
37	Science	9	3	50
38	Science	8	1	50
39	Science	5	1	50
40	Science	8	1	50
41	Science	5	1	50
42	Science	5	1	50

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