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Research Article

Teaching Amidst the Pandemic: Exploring the Perceptions and Experiences of Teachers in Remote Rural Municipalities in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The world has been shaken by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in a dramatic loss of human life and poses an unprecedented challenge to almost all aspects of life, and the Philippines has not been an exception to these challenges. As a result, this deadly situation has flipped the offline teaching process and paved the way towards online-based teaching. This study was conducted to determine the perceptions and experiences of teachers in the remote areas towards online teaching. This study employed a cross-sectional explanatory research design and the analyses reveal that respondents with "high" technological proficiency are more likely to have a "positive" attitude toward online education whereas respondents with "poor" technological skills are more likely to have a "negative" attitude toward online learning. This strongly suggest that educational leaders may venture on training teachers on how to develop their technological knowledge and skills since it has a significant impact to their attitude towards online teaching. Moreover, further analysis also reveals that the relationship between teacher-respondents' perceptions towards online teaching and their technological knowledge and skills was statistically significant. It is also recommended that training in online teaching needs to be provided to teachers to widen their understanding of online teaching.

Keywords: *experiences, online teaching, pandemic, perceptions, remote teaching*

Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak has triggered several changes in all parts of life, notably in education. This pandemic had a huge impact on people's lives all around the world, and it drastically impacted practically every element of life, including education, and the Philippines was no exception. Due to the difficulties of dealing with the pandemic and keeping it from spreading further, international leaders have

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developed stringent guidelines and rigorous measures to break the chain of COVID-19 transmission. In the field of education, the outbreak of this pandemic forced educational institutions to close in order to control the spread of this virus, forcing teaching professionals to devise alternative teaching methods in order to continue delivering education and sustaining student academic progress during this lockdown.

The emergence of this pandemic has expedited the adoption of online learning at all levels of education, from kindergarten to higher education. As a result of this unprecedented situation, schools have been forced to close, and face-to-face instruction have been diverted to the internet realm. These changes are designed to improve the learning process in the occurrence of a pandemic. However, the reality is not as envisioned since not all teachers and students respond favorably to the deployment of online learning. According to studies, certain teachers and students, particularly those in rural towns, encountered impediments and problems in online learning. As a result, the goal of this study is to examine the perceptions and experiences of teachers on teaching during the COVID-19 epidemic in Philippine's distant rural communities.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, this study aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of teachers in the rural municipalities in this time of pandemic. Specifically, this study aimed to:

1. determine the perception of the teacher-respondents assigned in the remote areas about online learning;
2. identify the teaching strategies used by the teachers in the remote areas during the pandemic;
3. analyze the technological knowledge and skills of the teacher-respondents; and
4. examine the relationship between the perceptions of the teachers in the remote areas towards online teaching and their technological knowledge and skills.

Methods

The nature of the research problems raised in this investigation lends themselves to a cross-sectional explanatory research design. Cross-sectional studies give data for characterizing the status of phenomena or the connections between phenomena at a certain moment in time. This methodology purposely mixes rigorous quantitative research examining the strength and frequency of constructs with rigorous quantitative analyses analysing the meaning and understanding of constructs to capitalize on the strengths of each method. Typically, the goal of cross-sectional research is to collect accurate data that allows for strong findings and the generation of new ideas that may be examined in future studies. In this study, the researchers gathered information about teachers' technological knowledge and competence and their attitudes towards online teaching. Based on the statistical data, the researchers identified a synergy between the level of technological knowledge of the teacher-respondents and their perception towards online teaching during the pandemic. As a result, this research design can provide stronger inferences about a finding and provides the opportunity to present a range of divergent viewpoints regarding the phenomena under study and engage vulnerable populations.

Moreover, a purposive sampling technique was employed in this study. The participants were chosen based on the following criteria: (a) they must be full-time and permanent public school teachers; and (b) they must be assigned to rural municipalities in Palawan during the implementation of online learning. This sampling method allows the researchers to extract a lot of information from the collected data. In general, the goal of purposive sampling is to provide a sample that may be presumed to be representative of the population. This is frequently achieved by using expert knowledge about the population to pick a non-random sample of components that reflect a cross-section of the population. In this study, 40 teachers were randomly chosen from different remote municipalities in Palawan as samples in this study.

Likewise, to gather the data needed, a 5-point Likert scale was used to determine the following psychological constructs: (1) the perception of the teacher-respondents about online learning; (2) teaching strategies used by

the teachers during the pandemic; (2) teachers' level of convenience and satisfaction in learning online; and (3) technological knowledge and skills of the teacher-respondents. To ensure the validity of the research instruments used in this study, they were validated by experts. Meanwhile, to ensure the reliability, the internal consistency of the statements was computed and those statements with a Cronbach alpha of 0.70 and above were used.

Furthermore, consistent with the cross-sectional research approach adopted in this study, quantitative measures were used. In the quantitative measures, both descriptive and inferential measures were employed. The mean, as a measure of central tendency, was employed as a descriptive measure to determine the following: (1) perception of the teacher-respondents towards teaching during the pandemic; (2) strategies used by the teacher-respondents; and (3) teacher-respondents' technological knowledge and skills. On the other hand, inferential measures such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were utilized to determine the relationship between the teacher-respondents' perceptions towards online teaching and their technological knowledge and skills.

In addition, the researchers observed ethical considerations in the conduct of this study starting from the pre-data collection to the post-data analysis. The researchers ensured that the research instruments used were validated by experts to confirm their appropriateness and credibility for use. Also, compliance with the prescribed ethical guidelines will be ensured through informed consent from the participants. Furthermore, all the participants were clearly informed about the process and reasons for the study, the risks and discomforts that they were likely to encounter, the benefits that might be derived from the research, and they were informed that their involvement would be entirely voluntary. That is, the participant has the right to refuse to take part or to withdraw from taking any part of the research without prejudice.

Results and Discussion

Respondents' Perceptions Towards Online Teaching in the Remote Areas

The following table shows the perceptions of the teacher-respondents assigned in the remote areas of Palawan towards online teaching. Descriptive measures such as mean was used to describe the data gathered.

Table 1. Respondents' Perceptions on Online Teaching

Statements	Mean Rating	Qualitative Description
1. *I want to learn more about online teaching.*	4.62	Strongly Agree
2. *I have knowledge and skills for online teaching.*	4.35	Strongly Agree
3. *I am comfortable with teaching online.*	4.24	Strongly Agree
4. *Online teaching is challenging but rewarding.*	4.15	Agree
5. *I am not ready to teach online.*	3.59	Agree
6. *I am confident with online teaching.*	3.97	Agree
7. *I am enjoying teaching online.*	3.79	Agree
8. *Online teaching is stressful.*	3.42	Agree
9. *I am struggling with online teaching.*	3.38	Agree
10. *I prefer online teaching to traditional teaching.*	2.57	Disagree
Over-All Mean Rating	**3.81**	**Agree**

Legend: 1.00 – 1.79 – Strongly Disagree; 1.80 – 2.59 – Disagree; 2.60 – 3.39 – Neutral; 3.40 – 4.19 – Agree; 4.20 – 5.00 – Strongly Agree

Table 1 shows that out of ten statements, three of them were strongly agreed by the teacher-respondents as indicated by their mean ratings. Based on the analysis, the statement *"I want to learn more about online teaching"* got the highest mean rating of 4.62 which implies that the teacher-respondents have favorable attitude towards learning more about the conduct of online teaching despite the fact that they are teaching in the remote

areas. This data was followed by the statement "*I have knowledge and skills for online teaching"* having a mean rating of 4.35. This stresses that the teacher-respondents are knowledgeable and skillful for online teaching. On the other hand, it can also be noted that the statement "*Online teaching is stressful"* got a mean rating of 3.42 which indicates that though the teacher-respondents perceived that they have enough knowledge and skills and eager to learn more about online teaching, they perceived online teaching to be stressful. This was validated by the statement *"I am struggling with online teaching"* having a mean rating of 3.38 which reflects that those teacher-respondents assigned in the remote areas of Palawan experienced difficulties with online teaching. Likewise, the mean rating of 2.57 for the statement "*I prefer online teaching to traditional teaching"* implies that the respondents perceived conventional face to face teaching to be more desirable as compared with online teaching.

Teaching Strategies Used by the Respondents During Online Teaching

The following table shows the teaching strategies used by the teacher-respondents as they teach online during the time of pandemic. Descriptive measure such as mean was also employed.

Table 2. Teaching Strategies Employed by the Respondents

	Teaching Strategies	Mean Rating	Qualitative Description
1.	Reading Materials	3.60	Frequently
2.	Video Lectures	3.35	Sometimes
3.	Cooperative Learning	2.97	Sometimes
4.	Problem-Based Learning	3.24	Sometimes
5.	Project-Based Learning	3.15	Sometimes
6.	Think-Pair Share	3.18	Sometimes
7.	Lecture-Discussion	3.06	Sometimes
8.	Hands-on Activities	3.00	Sometimes
9.	Game-Based Learning	3.06	Sometimes

Legend: 1.00 – 1.79 – Never; 1.80 – 2.59 – Seldom; 2.60 – 3.39 – Sometimes; 3.40 – 4.19 – Frequently; 4.20 – 5.00 – Always

Table 2 shows that out of the nine teaching strategies, only one strategy was employed by the teacher-respondents frequently. The mean rating of 3.60 implies that reading materials was frequently utilized by the teacher-respondents in the remote areas during the time of pandemic. Contrariwise, other teaching strategies identified were sometimes utilized by them. This stresses that the teacher-respondents were not able to maximize interactive and innovative teaching strategies as they deliver their instructions amidst the pandemic.

Respondents' Technological Knowledge and Skills

The following table shows the teacher-respondents' technological knowledge and skills. Furthermore, descriptive measure such as mean was also employed.

Table 3. Respondents' Technological Knowledge and Skills

	Statements	Mean Rating	Qualitative Description
1.	*I have sufficient knowledge of curriculum design and frameworks for online learning.*	4.56	Strongly Agree
2.	*I can use technology to develop interactive and engaging activities based on students' needs to enrich the teaching and learning process.*	4.53	Strongly Agree

	Statements	Mean Rating	Qualitative Description
3.	*I can choose technology that enhances the content for a lesson I teach.*	4.41	Strongly Agree
4.	*I can use technology to support students in deeper inquiry about the content, concepts, and relationships with other subject matter.*	4.38	Strongly Agree
5.	*I can use technology to provide students with learning opportunities in exploring content by themselves at their own individual pace.*	4.38	Strongly Agree
6.	*I am confident in choosing the appropriate new technologies to motivate my students to learn.*	4.32	Strongly Agree
7.	*I can develop appropriate assessment tools by using technology.*	4.29	Strongly Agree
8.	*I can use technology to appropriately design instructional materials aligned with the needs of my students for an effective teaching and learning process.*	4.29	Strongly Agree
9.	*I can apply instructional approaches, techniques, methods and strategies appropriate to individual differences with the help of technology*	4.26	Strongly Agree
10.	*I can implement effective classroom management in the teaching and learning process in which technology is used.*	4.24	Strongly Agree
	Over-All Mean Rating	**4.37**	**Strongly Agree**

Legend: 1.00 – 1.79 – Strongly Disagree; 1.80 – 2.59 – Disagree; 2.60 – 3.39 – Neutral; 3.40 – 4.19 – Agree; 4.20 – 5.00 – Strongly Agree

Table 3 depicts that all of the ten statements related to technological knowledge and skills were strongly agreed by the teacher-respondents. Based on the analysis, the statement "*I have sufficient knowledge of curriculum design and frameworks for online learning"* obtained the highest mean rating of 4.56. This implies that teacher-respondents demonstrate knowledge on various curriculum designs and frameworks that can be used for online teaching and learning. This data was followed by the statement "*I can use technology to develop interactive and engaging activities based on students' needs to enrich the teaching and learning process."* Having a mean rating of 4.53. This indicates that the teacher-respondents perceived that they can employ technology in their lessons to make the teaching and learning processes more engaging and more interactive. Similarly, the respondents also strongly agreed in the statement "*I can choose technology that enhances the content for a lesson I teach"* having a mean rating of 4.41. This stresses that the respondents can identify and select appropriate educational technologies that they can integrate in the delivery of their instructions.

Relationship between Respondents' Perceptions towards Online Teaching and their Technological Knowledge and Skills

The following table determines the relationship between the teacher-respondents' perceptions towards online teaching and their technological knowledge and skills. Furthermore, Inferential measure such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed. The inferential analysis was tested at 0.05 level of significance with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Table 4. Relationship between Respondents' Perceptions towards Online Teaching and their Technological Knowledge and Skills

Correlation Coefficient	Qualitative Description	p-value	Interpretation
0.87	Very Strong Positive Correlation	0.003	Significant

Legend for Correlation Coefficient: 0.00 – 0.199 – Very Weak; 0.200 – 0.399 – Weak; 0.400 – 0.599 – Moderate; 0.600 – 0.799 – Strong; 0.800 – 1.00 – Very Strong
Note: **Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Based on the analysis that can be gleaned in Table 4, the correlation coefficient of 0.87 indicates that there is a very strong positive correlation between the respondents' perceptions towards online teaching and their technological knowledge and skills. This means that a high emphasis placed on technology knowledge and abilities will result in a more favorable attitude toward online education. Hence, those teacher-respondents who are knowledgeable and skillful in using various educational technologies in their lessons have a positive attitude towards online teaching. Moreover, further analysis also reveals that the relationship between teacher-respondents' perceptions towards online teaching and their technological knowledge and skills was statistically significant. The p-value of 0.003, tested at a 0.05 level of significance, confirms that there is a significant relationship between the level of technological knowledge and skills of the teacher-respondents and their perceptions towards online teaching.

Conclusion and Recommendation

To shed light on the investigation's previous findings, this study concluded that respondents with "high" technological proficiency are more likely to have a "positive" attitude toward online education. Respondents with "poor" technological skills, on the other hand, are more likely to have a "negative" attitude toward online learning. This conclusion is consistent with Kisanga (2016), who discovered that instructors' exposure to various educational technologies had a statistically significant impact on their views about online teaching. Dela Rama et al. (2020), Cavas et al. (2009), Krishnakumar and Kumar (2011), Gasaymeh (2009), and Karaca, Can, and Yildirim (2013) all identified a link between technology exposure and attitude toward online teaching.

Therefore, this strongly suggest that educational leaders may venture on training teachers on how to develop their technological knowledge and skills since it has a significant impact to their attitude towards online teaching. It is also recommended that intensive and continuous training in online teaching needs to be provided to teachers to broaden their understanding and expertise of online teaching. Furthermore, teachers are also encouraged to attend trainings and seminars on various interactive and innovative teaching strategies that they can be used in their teaching even at this time of pandemic

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