



Research Article

An exploration of social science education from the lens of a public health emergency

Amando F. Grata¹ and Jennifer G. Evardone²

¹University of Perpetual Help System Dalta, Philippines; ²University of Eastern Philippines, Philippines

Correspondence should be addressed to Amando F. Grata  hajigrata@gmail.com
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This study delves into the lived experiences of social science teachers in Central Philippines during the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Descriptive phenomenology was used to uncover the meanings from their narratives, focusing on how they adapted to changes in education. The findings indicate that teachers underwent a transformative period through resilience and adaptability. With challenges such as shift from traditional instruction to modular learning, limited internet access and resources, teachers displayed flexibility and innovation. They adopted online platforms and devised new teaching strategies to maintain student engagement while providing academic support. The study also highlights the personal growth of teachers. They reflected on their work, with the crisis strengthening their value of relationships and the importance of maintaining a positive mindset. Beyond their pedagogical commitments, fostering learning and supporting their communities emerged as critical to their success during the pandemic. This study is consistent with broader understandings of how public health emergencies cause a change in educational practices. Social science teachers, with their focus on societal dynamics and civic responsibility, played a vital role in guiding students to assess the implications of such emergencies on public policy, individual rights, and social equity. Their perspectives were crucial in shaping responsive teaching strategies. The public health emergency demanded resilience and adaptability and caused professional growth. It reinvigorates the role teachers in education and societal engagement. The crisis underscored the intersection of education, health, and social responsibility, highlighting the significance of teachers in navigating challenges.

Keywords: Education, phenomenology, public health emergency, social science, teachers

1. Introduction

Teachers are crucial figures in schools, and their experiences are significantly influenced by public health emergencies. Education, in this context, requires substantial adjustments, as many teachers are not equipped to address emergencies affecting their classes. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates how a global crisis creates opportunities for learning, particularly on the adaptability and resilience of educational systems, teachers, students, and families. In such situations, teaching becomes more challenging than traditional face-to-face learning.

Several studies have analysed the practices and challenges of teaching during the public health emergencies. However, there remains a gap in research focusing on teachers' insights in overcoming the challenges of emergency remote teaching. In a study by Nugroho et al. (2021), it was revealed that emergency remote teaching activities included administering online forums and discussions, integrating social media, and designing interactive exercises. Despite these efforts, teachers faced challenges such as unfamiliarity with digital platforms, difficulties in providing timely feedback, and a lack of student motivation and engagement during remote instruction. In response to these challenges, the study further highlighted that participating in professional development programs, creating representative lesson plans, and designing interactive online classroom activities could serve as alternative solutions to the lack of technical knowledge on digital platforms (Hodges, et al., 2020). These findings contribute valuable insights to the field of teaching and serve as a wake-up call for educational stakeholders to "enhance the effectiveness of online teaching and learning, especially during the global pandemic" (Moorhouse, 2020, pp. 609–611).

Rising to the challenge of unpredictable shifts in pedagogy, public health emergencies forced teachers to undergo immediate transformations in their teaching methods. Social science teachers, in particular, had to navigate shifting demands with little preparation. The sudden transition to online learning underscored gaps in infrastructure and educators' readiness. Huda et al. (2021) revealed that teachers employed digital tools like online forums and social media to maintain student engagement, but unfamiliarity with these platforms added stress to the teaching process. Socio-economic disparities intensified the challenges, with the students lack of access to technology for remote learning (Gonzalez et al., 2021). This illustrates the complex nature of teaching during public health emergencies. Flexibility and innovation become essential.

Technological challenges were a prominent aspect of teachers' experiences, largely attributed to the low socio-economic status of students, which hindered their access to distance education activities (Palaza, 2020). Technology issues extended beyond weak internet connections; participants noted that "some students lacked access to necessary technological devices." This disparity affected students' opportunities to access technology during the public health emergency. The experiences of teachers engaged in distance education during this period "illustrate that access issues stemming from socio-economic disparities significantly impacted the quality of teaching" (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021, pp., 133-141)

Educational psychology plays a vital role in understanding the dynamics of teaching and learning, "particularly in the context of social science education during a public health emergency. The insights provided by educational psychology can illuminate how students process information, develop critical thinking skills, and navigate emotional responses to crises" (Berliner, 2006, pp. 3-27).

For instance, research on social and emotional learning [SEL] emphasizes the importance of fostering resilience and coping strategies in students, which is particularly relevant during challenging times (Zins et al., 2004). Furthermore, Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory underscores the significance of social interactions and cultural context in learning, which can be pivotal in shaping how students engage with social science content amidst a public health crisis. By applying educational psychology principles, teachers can understand better the needs of their students and design instructional strategies that promote adaptive learning environments. This exploration not only enhances pedagogical practices but also equips students with the skills necessary to critically analyze societal issues and respond effectively to the challenges posed by public health emergencies (Ormrod, 2020).

The pandemic served as a reminder of the need for resilient education systems, and provided insights into how teaching practices could evolve. Social science teachers found themselves addressing real-world issues like public health policy, misinformation, and social justice in their classrooms. As Lee et al. (2021) emphasized that these lessons cultivated students' awareness of civic responsibility, preparing them to navigate societal challenges. By integrating discussions about the public health emergency into their teaching, teachers enabled students to draw connections between their experiences and broader social dynamics. These insights buttress the importance of equipping learners with the tools to critically analyze their surroundings and become engaged citizens.

Conversely, teachers' well-being is a complex construct encompassing negative conditions such as stress, demotivation, and burnout (Huertas & Dávila, 2020). The study revealed that many social science teachers experienced significant mental health challenges during the global health crisis, including depression, anxiety, and other related issues. While not all of these challenges were directly caused by the public health emergency, many were exacerbated by the broader pandemic context. Feelings of hopelessness, negative thinking, and despair became common among teachers. These emotional struggles had a notable impact on their teaching processes, influencing both their emotional state and their coping mechanisms as they navigated the difficulties posed by the crisis.

Learning and growing amid uncertainty, the sudden reliance on digital platforms during the pandemic demanded that teachers step outside their comfort zones and acquire new skills.

Professional development programs focused on online teaching provided essential support (Gonzalez et al., 2021). Educators embraced new knowledge, experimenting with interactive classroom strategies and digital assessments. This transition underscored the idea that teaching is a continuous learning process. Teachers not only transmitted knowledge but also modeled resilience by adapting to the unfamiliar, turning challenges into opportunities for growth.

For many social science teachers, the public health emergency reinforced their sense of purpose. Despite the frustrations of remote teaching, the role of educators remained central to the well-being of students and the continuity of learning. Teaching became more than a profession, it evolved into a calling, requiring dedication beyond academic instruction. The pandemic revealed the emotional toll of teaching, with educators experiencing burnout, stress, and mental health challenges (Bastías, 2021).

The experiences of social science teachers illustrate the importance of resilience in navigating change and uncertainty. By documenting these stories, future educational policies can be shaped to better support teachers in similar crises.

Exploring the experiences of social science teachers during public health emergencies is essential for understanding the broader impacts of such crises on educational practices. Social science educators play a critical role in fostering students' understanding of societal dynamics, governance, and civic responsibility, which becomes particularly pertinent during a public health emergency. Their expertise enables them to guide students in analyzing the implications of such crises on individual rights, public policy, and social equity. Research by Muhammad (2020) emphasizes that teachers' beliefs significantly impact students' development as productive members of society, especially in the 21st century. Additionally, social science teachers can facilitate critical discussions that encourage students to engage with real-world issues, promoting critical thinking and informed citizenship.

These educators are uniquely positioned to help students understand the societal impact of public health emergencies, drawing connections between their personal experiences and broader social contexts. Furthermore, the findings can inform future training programs, ensuring that teachers are better equipped to handle similar situations. As Alonzo, et al. (2024) note that there is a need for crisis management skills and systemic changes to navigate schools toward recovery and resilience. Understanding educators' lived experiences can illuminate the need for systemic changes in education policy, enhancing resilience in the face of future public health emergencies. Therefore, this study highlights the critical role of social science teachers in navigating the complexities of educational practices during crises, equipping students to become thoughtful, engaged citizens in a rapidly changing world.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

The study employed a descriptive phenomenological method as a framework to analyze the narratives of the participants. Descriptive phenomenology focuses on understanding and interpreting the lived experiences of individuals, aiming to reveal the essence of those experiences through participants' own descriptions. This approach captures the richness and complexity of human experiences in a naturalistic context. The method makes it particularly suitable for the exploration of the intricacies of teachers' experiences during a public health emergency.

Using Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method, the study provides a structured approach that captures the complexities of teachers' lived experiences during a critical period in education. Through careful transcription, extraction of meanings, coding, clustering of themes, and interpretation of insights, the researchers clarified the profound challenges and adaptations faced by the teachers in response to the public health emergency.

2.2. Participants

The participants in this study were composed of ten Social Science teachers who possessed relevant experiences on the phenomenon of social science teaching in the context of public health emergency. Participants were selected based on specific criteria to ensure a diverse yet informed group. Firstly, the teachers have substantial experience in teaching, as their length of service provides a deeper understanding of the educational landscape and its challenges. All participants are from Central Philippines, specifically, they are teachers from the University of Eastern Philippines in Northern Samar, Philippines. Another key criterion for inclusion was the ability to communicate effectively in English or Filipino, which facilitated clear communication and the sharing of their experiences. Lastly, participants were chosen based on their willingness to share their personal stories with the researcher, reflecting a readiness to engage in meaningful discussions about their lived experiences. This carefully selected group of Social Science teachers contributed rich insights into the impact of the public health emergency on their teaching practices and emotional well-being.

2.3. Data Collection

Two procedures were employed to collect the lived experiences of the participants. The first procedure involved face-to-face interviews, during which the ten participants were individually interviewed to gather in-depth personal narratives. Following the individual interviews, a focus group discussion was conducted to buttress or expand the findings from the individual interviews. The FGD serves as a way to further enrich the data by providing a platform for participants to reflect on their individual experiences collectively, facilitating deeper insights into common themes or contrasting views. Open-ended questions were utilized to allow the participants to elaborate freely on their responses, encouraging a rich and authentic exploration of their experiences. Any relevant physical and emotional behaviors observed during the interviews were carefully documented to provide a more holistic understanding of the participants' lived experiences.

2.4. Data Analysis

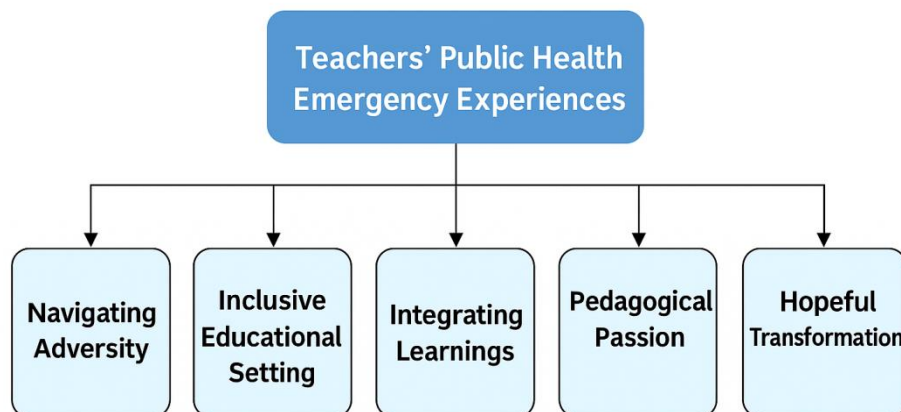
Within the framework of phenomenological research, this study employed Collaizi's systematic approach for analyzing qualitative data. The method consists of seven structured steps that ensure a comprehensive and insightful examination of participants' lived experiences. The first step involves the careful transcription of participants' narratives, ensuring that each individual is accurately represented and that the richness of their experiences is preserved. Following the transcription, the researchers extracted significant meanings from the narratives, identifying key phrases and elements that reflect the core of the participants' experiences.

Next, the process of coding began, where these meaningful units were systematically labeled and categorized. This coding process serves to organize the data, making it easier to analyze and interpret. After the coding, the researchers clustered the codes into broader themes, grouping related concepts together to uncover patterns and relationships. The final stage of the analysis involved interpreting the clustered themes to extract essential insights, highlighting the overall significance of the participants' experiences during the public health emergency. Through this method, a deeper understanding of the emotional, psychological, and professional impacts on social science teachers during the crisis.

3. Findings

These narratives of the teachers highlight the multifaceted challenges they faced, from managing remote learning and technological barriers to balancing personal well-being with professional responsibilities. They illustrate the teachers' capacity for innovation, resourcefulness, and resilience. Beyond overcoming difficulties, the crisis provided valuable lessons on appreciating life, fostering relationships, and embracing change. The reflections emphasize the importance of flexibility, collaboration, and continuous learning in creating a more adaptive and compassionate educational environment.

Figure 1
Teachers' Public Health Emergency Experiences



3.1. Navigating Adversity

The idea of "Navigating Adversity" encapsulates the resilience and resourcefulness of the teachers navigating the challenging landscape of teaching during a public health emergency. The experiences shared by the teachers underscore both the challenges they faced and the innovative strategies they employed to ensure effective learning.

Participant 1's transition from a substitute teaching role to a Special Lecturer at a University reveals the stark realities of teaching during a crisis. He reflects:

I found it a bit harder than the normal face-to-face setting which I was used to during my practice teaching. Both my students and I had a hard time since not all my students had the luxury of having smartphones. Besides, there is no internet connection in the place of assignment.

This statement underscores the barriers to communication and engagement that a lot of teachers encountered, emphasizing how these limitations forced reliance on distributed modules and quarterly home visits. Such situations complicated the educational process and underscored the socio-economic disparities among students because not all had access to technology for remote learning. Upon joining the university, Participant 1 noted an improvement in the learning environment, stating:

Now that I am in the university, and we still have the public health emergency and the blended learning, I could say that there's a bit of difference and a bit easier to reach out to the students when needed.

The shift towards blended learning, characterized by the use of technology, made communication and instruction more effective. Platforms like Google Meet, Zoom, and Messenger became invaluable tools for reaching out to students, facilitating instruction and fostering a sense of connection and support. Nonetheless, challenges remained, as Participant 1 remarked, "I still find it hard but at least not as hard as when I was in DepEd because now I have the means to reach out directly to my students when needed". This highlights the ongoing struggle that educators face in adapting to new modalities of teaching, even as they develop new tools to facilitate learning.

Participant 6 provided insight into the evolving role of teachers during this period. He underscored that "As far as the role of the teacher is concerned, nothing has changed much in the teaching and learning process. As a teacher, I am still the facilitator of learning". This observation reflects a core idea of pedagogy, which is the teacher's role as a facilitator even with the changes brought about by the public health crisis. However, he also noted an increase in workload, stating, "The workload of the teacher has doubled because of the additional tasks assigned to educators, such as making modules, preparing lessons, online checking of outputs". This increase in responsibilities underscores the adaptability of teachers as they balance traditional pedagogy with the new demands in the shift to blended learning formats. Participant 6 reflected on the personal growth that emerged from the challenges, noting that while the public health emergency had a

negative impact on many aspects of daily life, it also brought about positive changes. They specifically highlighted how the experience helped them develop resilience, enabling them to better face any problems that came their way. The acknowledgment of the negative and positive aspects of this experience highlights the dual nature of adversity. While challenges can be overwhelming, they also provide opportunities for personal and professional development, fostering resilience among teachers.

Participant 2 illustrated the importance of the online platforms to facilitate teaching and learning, explaining:

I use different platforms, which I think will be helpful in delivering my lessons like the Messenger group chat, which is more accessible for the students; private Facebook group where they can upload their learning activities; Google Classroom, where they can access their modules and send in their answers; Google Meet, and Zoom for online classes; and Google Forms for their major exams.

The proactive approach to utilizing technology reflects a trend among teachers to adapt to changing circumstances by harnessing digital tools to enhance engagement and accessibility. Despite the struggles with unfamiliar platforms, Participant 2 exhibited adaptability and resourcefulness in overcoming these challenges. Initially unsure about which platform to use, they sought guidance from their co-teachers. When faced with the issue of not knowing how to operate the different educational platforms, the participant took the initiative to watch instructional videos on YouTube, following the steps and instructions to familiarize themselves with the tools. This highlights a commitment to continuous learning and adaptation, essential traits for educators during challenging times.

Participant 4 also echoed the necessity for flexibility in teaching methods, stating, "Teaching during the pandemic was very challenging. Every teacher needs to be flexible and adopt different methods of teaching. I must try new techniques outside my comfort zone". This statement underscores the importance of adaptability in teaching practices, particularly in response to the challenges in remote learning.

Student engagement and academic integrity were prominent during the transition to online learning. It highlighted these challenges, and noted that while they could deliver learning materials to their students on time, there was lingering dissatisfaction due to uncertainty about the authenticity of the students' work. This concern underscores the broader issues of accountability and honesty that educators faced in the shift to remote education.

Participant 8's reflections on managing student outputs also illustrate the challenges of balancing accountability and support. Participant 8 noted that "Good practices include being strict when it comes to their outputs; no answers must be the same". This approach highlights the importance of establishing clear expectations and maintaining academic standards. The complexities of the teaching role were evident, as some teachers admitted to challenges in maintaining a balance between empathy and accountability. For instance, one participant reflected on moments of being overly lenient with students, offering so much consideration that it inadvertently discouraged them from submitting their requirements on time. This highlights the delicate equilibrium teachers had to navigate between supporting students and upholding academic standards. This tension between being supportive and maintaining rigor is a common challenge faced by teachers, emphasizing the need for thoughtful approaches to student engagement and accountability.

The experiences of the teachers reflect the complexities of teaching during a public health emergency, characterized by both significant challenges and opportunities for growth. Through a combination of resilience, innovation, and adaptability, the teachers navigated an evolving educational system. It demonstrated the critical importance of flexibility and creativity in pedagogy. Their reflections capture the difficulties faced during the public health emergency and highlight the enduring commitment to effective teaching and learning in the face of adversity.

3.2. Inclusive Educational Setting

Teachers navigated a transformative period characterized by uncertainty and rapid change. Their reflections reveal insights into personal growth, the evolution of teaching roles, the importance of adaptability, and the resilience required to overcome significant challenges.

One of the most striking lessons drawn from this experience is the heightened appreciation for life and relationships. Teacher Participant 1 articulated this sentiment beautifully, stating:

I have learned to value life and our existence with our loved ones more. I have become more conscious, active, and alert in many ways, while also growing more appreciative of the little things that bring happiness and contentment, for life is short, but we can make it longer by not taking things for granted.

This reflection underscores a universal response to crises, where individuals often reassess their priorities and recognize the importance of valuing moments with loved ones. The public health emergency forced many to confront the fragility of life. It led to a greater consciousness of how they engage with those around them. In an environment characterized by fear and uncertainty, this realization has become a vital anchor for both educators and students.

As the landscape of education shifted, teachers found themselves in new roles that required flexibility and creativity. Teacher Participant 2 noted, "My role as a teacher has never stopped, but it has changed somehow, especially in the way I connect with my students". The transition to remote and blended learning necessitated a re-evaluation of how teachers engage with their students. This shift challenged the teachers to find innovative ways to maintain relationships and facilitate learning, even from a distance. By recognizing the need to adapt, the teachers displayed remarkable resilience, highlighting their commitment to student success despite the hurdles presented by the pandemic.

The challenges of connectivity during the pandemic further emphasized the necessity of adaptability in teaching methods. Participant 4 expressed:

One of the difficulties in teaching during the public health emergency is the internet connection. Thus, I decided to get my own internet connection so I could lessen the problem of connecting with my students through Google Classroom, Zoom, and links.

This proactive step underscores the lengths to which teachers went to ensure that their students continue to learn effectively. By taking initiative to have reliable internet access, teachers demonstrated their dedication to overcome obstacles. They emphasized that adaptability is not just about coping but also about proactively finding solutions to ensure educational continuity.

One participant noted that the approach offered a sense of satisfaction, as it allowed both teachers and students to engage in the learning process while remaining in their comfort zones. This perspective highlights the adaptability of blended learning in providing flexibility amidst the difficulties faced. This perspective reflects an understanding of the situation and recognizes that the challenges were formidable, and there were opportunities for growth and exploration. Blended learning allowed flexibility that could cater to different learning styles, leading to more personalized educational experiences. This adaptability not only made learning more accessible but also fostered a sense of autonomy among students, which is crucial for engagement and motivation.

The emotional toll of the public health emergency was substantial among teachers. The profound realization of life's value during the public health emergency was emphasized, highlighting the importance of cherishing time with loved ones and prioritizing their safety. This reflection underscores the personal and emotional shifts experienced during this challenging period. This acknowledgment of life's fragility is echoed in the experiences of teachers. The crisis underscored the importance of safety, community, and mutual support. In a time of collective grief and uncertainty, many educators recognized the significance of compassion and service to one another and their students. This collective resilience is a testament to the strength found in community, reminding individuals that they are not alone in their struggles.

Further, the experiences shared highlight the challenges teachers faced regarding their workload. Participant 6 remarked, "Being a teacher is not an easy task. In the middle of chaos and confusion, I have been able to survive through the help of my colleagues and the support of the administrators and the institution". This comment shows the collaborative attitude that emerged during the crisis. As teachers relied on one another for support, they built a sense of camaraderie that was important in navigating the complexities of teaching during the pandemic. The sharing of resources, strategies, and emotional support became a vital lifeline, showcasing the power of community in fostering resilience.

The life lessons learned from the public health emergency are far-reaching. Teachers emerged from this experience with a renewed sense of purpose, appreciation for life, and understanding of their roles. They adapted to new realities with creativity and resourcefulness, transforming challenges into opportunities for growth. The reflections of these teachers remind us of the strength found in community, the importance of flexibility, and the need to prioritize what truly matters in life. As they move forward, these lessons will undoubtedly shape their approaches to teaching and their interactions with students, fostering a more inclusive educational environment.

3.3. Integrating Learnings

The theme "Integrating Learnings" embodies the transformation experienced by the teachers during the pandemic. It highlighted their resilience and adaptability in a changing educational landscape. As traditional teaching methods became obsolete, the teachers were compelled to navigate the complexities of distance learning, which necessitated the acquisition of new skills and the embrace of innovative technologies. This shift was not merely an adjustment in resources, but a redefinition of their roles as teachers. The uncertainty surrounding the pandemic aggravated the emotional toll on teachers, forcing them to confront their fears and anxieties about health, career stability, and the efficacy of their teaching methods. Nevertheless, they emerged with a renewed sense of purpose and determination to enhance their professional competencies, reflecting a commitment to lifelong learning. As they adapted to the demands of online platforms and hybrid learning, teachers exemplified the importance of flexibility and creativity in education. Their experiences during this period serve as a testament to the transformative power of challenges, ultimately fostering a culture of innovation and growth within the teaching profession.

Participant 5 expressed the emotional toll of the pandemic, stating, "When the pandemic struck, the possible feelings a person might experience were varied. For me, it was distressing and thought-provoking. It was traumatic and challenging". This reflection underscores the psychological impact of the crisis, illustrating how fear and anxiety became prevalent among teachers. The apprehension about traveling to work for instance and the possibility of infection contributed to a heightened sense of vulnerability. This emotional framework was the foundation for a complex relationship with their professional roles. It prompted them to reevaluate their responsibilities and the environments in which they worked.

The transition to distance learning marked a significant turning point for many teachers. Participant 7 shared, "I am a fresh graduate, and we were trained to teach in face-to-face classes. But I landed a job with modular distance learning as the mode". This statement reflects the reality faced by many new teachers, who found themselves unprepared for the shift in teaching modalities. Despite the confusion, they recognized that the situation also provided an opportunity for growth. As they engaged with new technologies and methods, teachers began to develop flexibility and competitiveness in their professional identities. Participant 7's insights highlight an important aspect of the pandemic experience- the necessity of adapting to new learning environments and technologies in order to facilitate effective teaching.

Participant 3 also illustrated the challenges of adjusting to new technology, noting that "Basically, when things are new, confusion is apparent, especially when using Google Classroom, Google Meet, and other educational platforms". This statement encapsulates a challenging learning curve teachers faced to learn the online platforms. The confusion transformed into a determination to use new tools and techniques for teaching. They demonstrated their willingness

to evolve. Their openness to learning was driven by a desire to create meaningful educational experiences for their students, reflecting a commitment to professional development in the face of adversity.

The burden of uncertainty prompted deep reflections. The uncertainty brought by the public health emergency led to profound fears about the future of teaching. One participant expressed anxiety about the potential long-term impacts on their career, questioning whether they would be able to continue as a teacher if the crisis persisted. This reflection highlights the deep concern and instability felt by educators as they navigated an uncertain professional landscape. The acknowledgment that teaching requires effort, patience, and sacrifice underscores the emotional and practical complexities of the profession. Despite these fears, the necessity for flexibility became evident, as teachers recognized their role as frontliners in education.

In confronting their fears, Participant 4 shared a personal strategy: "I just changed my mindset from negative to positive, and I tried not to think of anything that I was anxious about". This proactive approach highlights the importance of mindset in facing challenges. By reframing their perspective, teachers could focus on the positives and maintain their motivation. This mental shift not only helped teachers cope with stress but also reinforced their commitment to their students, emphasizing the importance of resilience in the personal and professional contexts.

Some teachers demonstrated an innovative approach to maintain student engagement during the pandemic. Participant 6 explained, "The best practice that I contributed as a teacher was exerting effort to conduct house-to-house consultations". This dedication in providing support to students ensured the continuity of learning and highlights the role of teachers as proactive facilitators of education.

However, the challenges faced during this time underscored the need for institutional support. Participant 2 noted a crucial point on the improvements in support for teachers: "Perhaps more support in terms of equipment, tools, and transportation for teachers during house-to-house discussions would help". This underscores the critical role that institutional resources play in empowering teachers to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. By addressing the needs of teachers, institutions can enable them to focus on delivering quality education to their students.

Integrating learnings therefore is a multifaceted challenge faced by teachers during the pandemic. Through their reflections, teachers illustrated a journey of emotional turmoil, adaptation, and resilience as they navigated a transformed pedagogy. The willingness to integrate new knowledge and skills under uncertain conditions showcases the strength of teachers and highlights the need for supportive structures within educational institutions.

3.4. Pedagogical Passion

Pedagogical passion underscores the resilience teachers display in the face of unprecedented challenges brought on by the public health emergency. As schools transitioned from modular learning back to limited face-to-face interactions, many teachers found themselves negotiating complex logistical hurdles and emotional problems. Participant 1 articulated this sentiment stating that:

I don't believe my role has changed simply because of this public health emergency. This experience has made me realize that teaching is not just a profession; it is a vocation. My experiences during this time will help me improve and become a better educator.

This reflection highlights how the pandemic has reinforced the intrinsic value of teaching, transforming it into a profound calling rather than just a career. Further, Participant 3 echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the effort required to ensure a smooth transition for students accustomed to modular learning:

It is challenging to teach in this limited face-to-face setting since learners have been exposed to modular learning for two years. A smooth transition of content requires extensive work for teachers, and lessons should be contextualized and localized.

This statement illustrates the dedication educators must exhibit in not only delivering curriculum but also in adapting it to meet the diverse needs of their students.

In the pursuit of innovation, the teachers tried new strategies to foster engagement and connection among students. One participant shared how they creatively integrated interactive games, such as charades and "Pinoy Henyo", a popular Filipino word-guessing game, into their lessons while maintaining safety protocols. They noted that these activities significantly boosted student engagement and helped foster stronger interpersonal relationships among classmates, despite the challenges of remote learning. This approach illustrates how teachers can creatively navigate constraints to maintain learning, while emphasizing the calling to connect with students meaningfully.

The sense of community among teachers became important also during the public health emergency. Participant 5 expressed their approach to overcoming difficulties by seeking guidance: "When things get hard, I ask for help from my mentors and strive harder each single day. I accept suggestions and criticisms for I know these will help me grow in my profession". This openness to collaboration and feedback reflects the shared commitment within the teaching community, reinforcing the idea that teaching is a collective endeavour rooted in support and continuous improvement.

The participants highlighted the emotional toll of the pandemic, noting that the public health emergency hindered the full development of students' potential. Additionally, the increase in paperwork added to the burden on parents, who were required to assist their children with the modules. This reflection underscores the broader challenges faced by both teachers and families during this difficult period.

This acknowledgment of the broader implications of the crisis underscores the multifaceted nature of teaching as a calling, where educators are not only responsible for imparting knowledge but also for navigating the emotional and logistical challenges their students and families face.

Relatedly, Participant 8 encapsulated the essence of resilience in teaching, stating, "Nothing is impossible with the support of my colleagues, participation in webinars, and a steadfast dedication to teaching. If one loves their profession, overcoming difficulties in the workplace and in life becomes achievable". This statement speaks to the heart of the teaching vocation. The unwavering dedication to both personal and professional growth, driven by a passion for education and a commitment to student success.

Thus, the participants' pedagogical passion reflects the deep-seated commitment teachers have toward their profession. Through collaboration, innovation, and personal reflection, teachers have not only adapted to the challenges of a public health emergency but have also reaffirmed the significance of their roles as educators. Their experiences illuminate the transformative nature of teaching, reinforcing that it is indeed a calling rooted in resilience, dedication, and a profound commitment to nurturing the next generation.

3.5. Hopeful Transformation

The public health emergency reshaped pedagogy. It challenged teachers to rethink their roles and responsibilities while balancing personal and professional demands. With limited resources, teachers struggled to provide quality education, often relying on modular learning and home visits to support students. As they adapted to the new normal, teachers discovered new strengths, learning to embrace change with creativity, optimism, and perseverance. These experiences highlighted the importance of resilience and the passion that drives teachers, inspiring them to remain steadfast in their calling despite the difficulties. Through these efforts, educators found fulfillment not only in overcoming challenges but also in witnessing their students thrive under difficult circumstances.

One teacher reflected on the numerous challenges faced during the pandemic, particularly the lack of resources. This shortage caused significant stress, especially when reproducing modules, as the school had insufficient printing machines and bond paper. Additionally, the distribution of learning materials posed a substantial risk to teachers, further complicating their responsibilities.

The teacher also expressed difficulty in performing specific tasks for students, highlighting the broader logistical and safety challenges educators confronted during this time.

This struggle with limited resources underscored the complexity of ensuring continuity in education while prioritizing safety. Yet, teachers persevered by embarking on new methods of engaging students and reshaping routines. As Participant 1 explained:

My role as a teacher has become more crucial. I make sure that my learners stay engaged and do not lose attention by helping them create new routines and schedules that match their strengths. I always monitor my students regarding their lessons through home visitation.

This shift from traditional classroom teaching to home visits illustrates how educators extended their efforts beyond conventional settings to maintain student engagement and well-being. However, maintaining learning continuity through online platforms was not always feasible due to technological limitations. Teachers had to innovate through modular approaches to bridge the gaps. Participant 3 shared:

Since online teaching is not applicable here because of the problem in network connectivity, and some of the learners have no gadgets to use, I resort to a modular approach where students can do their tasks in activity sheets. I see it that all my students have a copy of the printed modules and that they understand them easily.

This strategy reflects the teachers' ability to adjust instructional strategies, ensuring that every student had equitable access to learning despite infrastructure challenges.

Teachers navigated these obstacles by cultivating a positive mindset and committing to growth. One teacher remarked, "In surpassing challenges brought about by the sudden change of learning setup, I try to cope by committing to change, accepting the challenges, and having a positive mindset". This resilience enabled teachers not only to manage the new demands but also to reflect deeply on their roles and the importance of their profession. Another participant shared that the public health emergency led to several important realizations about life and their profession, emphasizing the significance of teaching as a profession, recognizing the need for constant preparedness in the face of challenges. The participant also acknowledged the importance of staying updated with new learnings to adapt to the evolving demands of the teaching profession. Furthermore, the participants reflected on the brevity of life, stressing the importance of maintaining a positive outlook and enjoying life despite the difficulties faced. These reflections highlight the deep personal and professional growth that occurred as a result of the pandemic.

The challenges extended beyond the teachers themselves to the students they served. Teacher Participant 5 highlighted the academic and personal pressures students faced: "For the students, the main challenges that the students are encountering are self-studying, poor internet connection, lack of sleep, and time to answer all the modules due to the great number of activities, distractions, and lack of focus". The burden on students was compounded by the absence of traditional teacher-led learning, forcing them to navigate self-directed study amidst overwhelming distractions.

Meanwhile, teachers also felt the weight of performance pressure. As one teacher shared,

For us teachers, I can attest that the educative process in these trying times has a huge difference from the normal setting. The teachers lack time for planning, there are lots of paperwork, and the performance pressure that we feel from our school and administrator is overwhelming.

This constant pressure to meet administrative expectations while adapting to a new teaching modality added to the emotional and professional toll. Despite these hurdles, teachers found hope and motivation in their students' responses. Teacher Participant 7 noted, "Seeing our learners appreciate our efforts and sacrifices makes us all proud and pushes us teachers not to yield to the challenges". This acknowledgment of their efforts by students served as a beacon of encouragement, reinforcing their sense of purpose amidst the adversity.

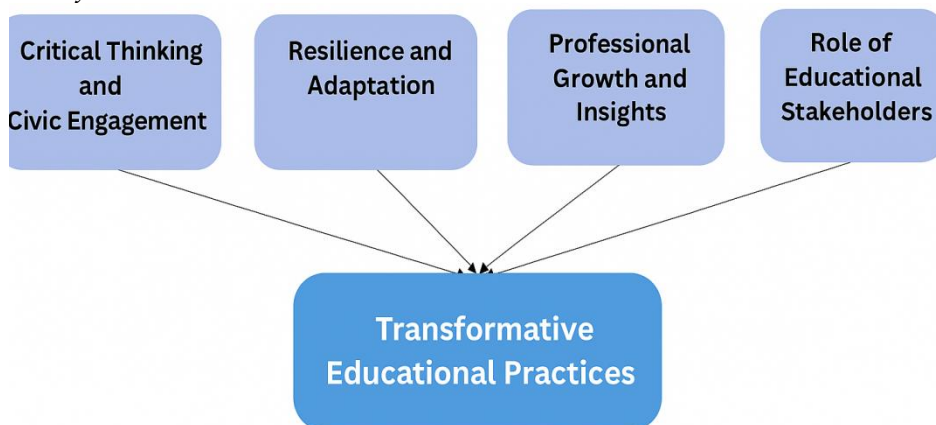
Ultimately, the pandemic transformed teachers not only as professionals but also as individuals who embraced resilience, adaptability, and hope. As they navigated the complexities of the changes in pedagogy, teachers emerged stronger, equipped with new strategies and a renewed

commitment to their calling. They exemplified how embracing change with a positive mindset and a sense of purpose can foster unity and perseverance even in the face of overwhelming challenges.

The structural examination of teachers' experiences during the public health emergency, underscore their transformative educational practices. The findings reveal how the teachers adapted to new learning environments, fostered critical thinking and civic engagement, demonstrated resilience in overcoming challenges, and experienced professional growth. Their reflections highlight the role of educational stakeholders in innovative teaching practices, which may ensure the resilience of teachers and students with competencies and renewed commitment to education. Figure 2 presents teachers' transformative educational practices.

Figure 2

Transformative Educational Practices



The public health emergency served as both a challenge and an opportunity for educators to reflect on their practices and adapt to new realities. Teachers not only ensured the continuity of learning but also emerged as pillars of emotional support and civic engagement. Their experiences demonstrate that education in times of crisis is not limited to academic instruction but extends to nurturing social responsibility, well-being, and community cohesion.

3.6. Critical Thinking and Civic Engagement

Social science teachers played a pivotal role in helping students critically engage with the societal dynamics unfolding during the crisis. Their focus on public policy, civic responsibility, and social equity aligned with the need for students to understand the complex societal changes brought about by the pandemic. Research by Putnam and Garrett (2020) emphasizes that periods of crisis can spark renewed interest in civic engagement and collective responsibility, which aligns with the efforts of social science teachers to foster critical thinking. Teachers encouraged students to analyze public health policies, individual rights, and the uneven social impact of the crisis, promoting greater awareness of real-world issues. By using the pandemic as a lens to discuss social responsibility, the teachers guided students through difficult content and exemplified their role as moral and civic leaders. Fullan and Gallagher (2020) highlight that educational systems must focus on ensuring interconnected thinking during times of uncertainty, to prepare students for active citizenship. The role of social science teachers thus extended beyond curriculum delivery, aiming to cultivate socially aware and critically engaged learners.

3.7. Resilience and Adaptation

The transition to modular and blended learning approaches underscored the need for resilience and adaptability among the teachers. Many teachers had to face challenges such as limited digital resources, insufficient teaching materials, and connectivity issues. As Fullan and Quinn (2015) argue, effective educational systems during crises require teachers to act as "change agents," promoting innovative practices in the face of adversity. Teachers embraced modular learning

when online platforms were not feasible, ensuring that students received printed modules and continued learning despite external challenges.

These adaptations highlight the importance of professional flexibility. Reflection on the experiences of teachers during the crisis reveals that they not only adjusted their teaching practices but also provided emotional and academic support to students, addressing both personal well-being and educational needs. According to Putnam and Garrett (2020), community connections during challenging times is important to build resilience. This aligns with the teachers' reflections, where relationships and social bonds became central to their educational mission.

3.8. Professional Growth and Insights

Crises often catalyse professional growth, as evidenced by teachers' increased engagement with both academic and societal issues. As Fullan and Gallagher (2020) note, professional development in times of uncertainty involves more than just skill acquisition. It includes developing deeper empathy and a broader sense of purpose. Teachers reported newfound realizations about the importance of their roles, emphasizing preparedness, lifelong learning, and the value of personal well-being. These insights suggest that the crisis reinforced teachers' commitment to education not merely as a career but as a vocation intertwined with community support and individual growth. Their reflections align with research on transformative learning, which posits that challenging experiences can lead to new perspectives and professional renewal. Teachers emerged from the crisis with a clearer understanding of their roles as educators and community leaders, capable of nurturing both academic achievement and personal development.

3.9. Role of Educational Stakeholders

The insights gained from teachers' experiences during the pandemic offer several key implications for educational stakeholders. Administrators and policymakers must prioritize investments in digital infrastructure and provide adequate resources to mitigate connectivity issues and reduce administrative burdens on teachers. Fullan and Quinn (2016) stress that supporting teachers with the right tools and environments fosters creativity and prevents burnout, ensuring sustainable reform. Moreover, training programs should be designed to prepare educators for hybrid learning models and equip them with strategies for addressing both academic and emotional challenges among students. School leaders must cultivate collaborative environments that encourage teamwork, mentorship, and peer support, which are crucial for maintaining teacher well-being during times of stress (Fullan & Gallagher, 2020). Community partnerships and parental involvement are also essential in bridging the gaps created by modular and online learning. The crisis has demonstrated the importance of coordinated efforts between educators, families, and communities to ensure student success and well-being. As Putnam and Garrett (2020) argue, strengthening social connections within educational ecosystems is vital to fostering resilience and civic-mindedness.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The exploration of social science teachers' experiences during public health emergencies, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, reveals a profound impact on education, both structurally and pedagogically. Public health emergencies, as Fullan and Quinn (2015) argue, are transformative events that necessitate a fundamental shift in educational practices, requiring schools to reevaluate their roles beyond traditional academic objectives. These crises, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, acted as catalysts for change, compelling educators to adapt swiftly and rethink their strategies. This shift was about technology adoption and addresses the emotional, social, and community needs that arose as a result of the pandemic.

Teachers had to integrate emotional support into their educational practices, ensuring that their students were not only learning but also coping with the emotional and psychological challenges of the crisis. This shift aligns with the idea that sustainable educational reform must be rooted in values such as empathy and equity, not just technological advancements or academic outcomes.

The pandemic underscored that education cannot merely be about transmitting knowledge; it must also be about fostering social responsibility, personal growth, and community cohesion.

Teachers' experiences during this time illustrate how education in times of crisis extends beyond academic instruction. Social science teachers, in particular, found themselves addressing real-world issues such as public health policies, misinformation, and social justice, which became central themes in their classrooms. As Lee et al. (2021) emphasized, by integrating these issues into their teaching, teachers were able to cultivate students' awareness of civic responsibility, encouraging them to think critically about societal challenges. These educators not only ensured the continuity of learning but also acted as pillars of emotional support and civic engagement. Their classrooms became spaces where students could discuss and analyze the complexities of the crisis, drawing connections between their personal experiences and broader social dynamics.

Moreover, the pandemic illustrated the intersection of education, health, and social responsibility. Teachers' roles evolved beyond that of knowledge providers to become facilitators of resilience and emotional well-being.

According to Boholano, et al. (2024) social networking sites like YouTube and Facebook were used as resources for knowledge sharing, educational and research purposes, and collaboration. However, as Gonzalez et al. (2022) point out the challenges and opportunities presented by the sudden shift to online education saying that socio-economic disparities exacerbated the challenges, with students lacking access to the technology required for remote learning. These disparities underscored the importance of addressing equity within educational systems, ensuring that all students had the tools to succeed, regardless of their socio-economic background. As technology became a central part of education, its accessibility and equitable distribution became paramount.

Furthermore, the pandemic prompted a rethinking of how education could be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of students. According to Al-Haq and McKenzie (2020), understanding educators' lived experiences during such crises is essential for informing systemic changes in education policy. Teachers' narratives provide insights into the challenges they faced, such as managing the emotional toll of teaching under the stress of a global crisis, which affected both their well-being and their teaching practices (Bastías, 2021). These experiences are vital for reshaping policies to support educators better, particularly in terms of mental health resources, professional development, and access to technological tools.

Educational psychology, as emphasized by Berliner (2006) and Ormrod (2020), also played a critical role in understanding how students processed information and dealt with emotional responses to the crisis. The shift to online learning highlighted the importance of social and emotional learning [SEL] frameworks, which were crucial in fostering resilience and coping strategies among students. Zins et al. (2004) noted that SEL is particularly relevant in challenging times like the pandemic, as it helps students develop emotional intelligence, which is essential for navigating crises. By incorporating SEL into their teaching, educators could help students process the upheaval caused by the pandemic and develop the emotional resilience needed to cope with future challenges.

In addition to addressing emotional well-being, teachers also faced significant technological challenges. As Palaza (2020) and Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) noted, issues such as weak internet connections and lack of access to devices were barriers that impeded the quality of education. These technological issues were compounded by socio-economic disparities, which further exacerbated the challenges faced by both teachers and students. However, the teachers' experiences also highlighted the opportunities for growth and innovation in the face of adversity. Teachers who participated in professional development programs were able to develop new skills and adapt to digital tools, demonstrating the importance of continuous learning and professional growth in education (Gonzalez et al., 2021).

The pandemic also underscored the importance of creating educational environments that value not only academic success but also personal growth, social connection, and civic responsibility. As Lee et al. (2021) emphasized, teaching social science during a public health crisis provided an opportunity to cultivate students' awareness of their role in society and their responsibility toward

the community. These lessons go beyond the classroom, equipping students with the tools to analyze societal issues and engage with them meaningfully.

The experiences of social science teachers during the pandemic offer valuable lessons for future educational reforms. They demonstrate the need for an education system that is not only academically rigorous but also emotionally supportive, socially responsible, and equitable. The insights gained from this crisis should inform future educational practices, ensuring that the lessons learned during this time continue to shape responsive and transformative educational approaches. By prioritizing empathy, equity, and collaboration, educators can help build resilient educational systems that are better equipped to navigate future crises.

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