Experiences of the private school teachers in online teaching: A phenomenological study

Rhona Marielle Abayon[1*]

[1]BEED Department, Mindanao State University - General Santos City, College of Education, Philippines,*
rhonamarielle.abayon@msugensan.edu.ph

*Corresponding author: rhonamarielle.abayon@msugensan.edu.ph

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Abstract: The shift to online education due to the COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant and drastic changes in the teaching landscape, particularly for private school educators. This study delves into the lived experiences of these educators in General Santos City as they navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by online teaching. The primary objective of this qualitative study is to shed light on the experiences of private school teachers in General Santos City regarding online teaching. Through phenomenological inquiry, the aim is to uncover the perceptions, emotions, and effects of transitioning to online instruction. Utilizing a phenomenological approach, six online educators were purposefully selected as participants. Each participant underwent individual in-depth interviews, which were recorded and transcribed with their consent. Creswell's data analysis method was employed to analyze the spoken data, allowing for the extraction of themes and patterns from the participants' narratives. The results revealed two contrasting concepts in the perception of online teaching among educators, characterized by both challenges and conveniences. Participants expressed a wide range of emotions during the transition, yet identified numerous advantages that facilitated personal growth and development. Notably, online teaching was found to enhance educators' skills and foster continuous learning. This study underscores the resilience and adaptability of private school teachers in General Santos City amidst the challenges posed by online teaching. Despite the difficulties encountered, participants remained motivated and optimistic about the potential of online platforms as a novel teaching modality. The findings suggest that online teaching presents an opportunity for educators to expand their pedagogical repertoire, improve their skills, and nurture their emotional and intellectual well-being. Overall, educators embraced online teaching as a pathway for professional advancement and excellence, underscoring their commitment to delivering quality education despite the adversities encountered in the digital realm.).

Keywords: Education, Experiences, Online Teaching, Private College Teachers, Phenomenology, Educational Management, Philippines

1. Introduction

"Greater access to broadband connectivity, guidance in the best uses of the Web for learning, understanding of how people learn differently with the Internet, and content that leverages the powerful capabilities of the Web" - (Isakson & Kerrey, 2000). These feelings, reported by the Web-Based Education Commission fourteen years ago, continue to be the driving force behind the current drive for K-12 online education. The Commission defined four areas that needed a call for higher education action to differentiate the experiences of private school teachers who teach online instructions. Just as the vignette presented, the technology helps significantly in our daily use, especially for online teachers. Still, it will allow private teachers in online teaching their experiences to adapt the transition and their perspectives and coping
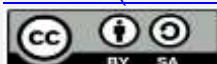
strategies to the use of technology in learning, tools, and proper use of the Internet. A systematic review of the literature on online education provided a wealth of information about factors that must consider in the planning and implementation of e-learning. The implications of online educators' experiences as part of the teaching and learning process, including problems affecting the professional growth needs of online educators, were also revealed. The faculty's assessment of online teaching practices constitutes an essential dimension of the online environment. This idea is critical given that faculty are the driving force of an institution, and their perceptions ponder mainly on the value of online learning programs and have a substantial impact on the institutions that support them (Martin et al., 2019; Dumford & Miller, 2018; Davidson, 2017; Al-Samarraie & Saeed, 2018).

One of the teachers' learning strategies is online instruction during these challenging times. There was a sudden shift in the country's educational system. As skilled teachers, we all go through life cycles, and each person has their way of coping with their emotional changes (Sokal et al., 2020; Perini et al., 2018; Cho & Heron, 2015; Broadbent, 2015; García & Weiss, 2020). Thus, in this study, the researcher looked into private teachers in one of the Higher Institutions in General Santos City, teaching online with at least two years of teaching experience in private schools. Therefore, in describing the lived experiences of these teachers as this can raise concern to the intended beneficiaries of the study and come up with the implications to practice through the process of phenomenological design.

2. Methodology

The descriptive qualitative phenomenological approach was used in this research because the researcher went to the specific setting of interest to collect the data and explain the natural environment of the direct source of data. The main instrument was the researcher herself. Suppose the research object was to collect data, including interview transcripts, field notes, audio recordings, diaries, personal statements, official records, and anything else that could convey the actual words or acts of the individuals involved in the study. These research techniques would be used (Cristancho et al., 2018; Cypress, 2018; Mohajan, 2018; Willis et al., 2016).

In addition, this was the most influential research approach, as the key concern of the analysis was to appreciate how people make sense of their lives. As researchers, we wanted to know what the participants thought about their lived experiences as teachers why they believed and what they did. The researcher's emphasis was likely to be the participants' assumptions, motivations, explanations, priorities, and values about the experiences they experienced in their lives. The researcher also did her utmost best to capture the thought as accurately as possible from the participants' viewpoint (Buffel, 2018; Waite et al., 2019; Bolino & Grant, 2016; Ellard et al., 2016; Soss, 2015).

The primary qualitative descriptive design used in this study was biography and phenomenology. The researchers decided to use oral histories among the numerous types of biographical studies. Oral stories are where the researcher, usually from several people, collects personal recollections. It indicates that the investigator identified unique or meaningful incidents encountered by online teachers in their lived experiences. While the participants narrated their experiences, the researcher attempted to document them and use the qualitative analysis (Vindrola-Padros et al., 2020; O'Sullivan et al., 2021; Mohajan, 2018; Bloom & Crabtree, 2015). Furthermore, the researcher stressed that through phenomenology, extended interviews of special events could be best understood. She endorsed these ideas when she claimed that she was most interested in understanding how things have happened as encountered by online private school teachers. Through the use of phenomenological research their experiences would be interpreted and she would seek significant insights for these experiences (Bressman et al., 2018; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020; Alase, 2017; Mesina, 2016; Sun et al., 2016).

It points out that phenomenological reduction could be used where the investigator essentially reduced the fields to a sphere of pure phenomena, from its views with all biases. The significance of the phenomenon is therefore permitted to occur. Like biographies, in phenomenological analysis, the researchers inspired participants to relive the experiences they had in their minds. The researcher used the notes collected using interviews, tape-recorded interviews, and a session to do this. Once completed, the researcher would look for signs deemed important in explaining experiences about the chosen phenomenon in every topic and comment. These statements were then grouped into themes by the researcher, as well as the aspects of the experiences the participants had in common. The investigator tried to identify the fundamental features of

the experiences encountered by the participants (Fuchs, 2017; Van Manen, 2016; Powney & Watts, 2018; Fink, 2020).

In summary, this phenomenological research focused on the basic structure of a single phenomenon by interviewing the target participants of the study. Then, as the researcher extracted what to be considered essential statements to explain the phenomenon by each participant and then grouped their statements into themes. The researcher then integrated these themes into a narrative explanation of the phenomenon (Mueller, 2019; King et al., 2018; Tracy, 2019; Tenney et al., 2019; House, 2017). Since this was a qualitative study, ethical issues were inevitably present and could be addressed to increase the potential and validity of this academic paper. In conducting this phenomenological study, the researcher considered and constituted protocols to secure ethical and social aspects of the research undertakings. The researcher secured approval from the participants to conduct the study.

The research participants in this study were the private school teachers who experienced online teaching. Since the primary purpose of this phenomenology was to describe the teachers' lived experiences in online education, I considered the participants who had rich experience in this phenomenon, considering their years of service and the years in online teaching. Also, I thought of their willingness to participate in this study because I had generated important information for the analysis. In selecting the participants in this study, I employed purposeful sampling. It involved identifying and selecting incredibly knowledgeable and experienced individuals about the particular phenomenon. Furthermore, the research participants in this study were six (6) online teachers teaching from four (4) schools in General Santos City. They were the private school teachers who taught online classes for at least two years and served for more than two years in the teaching profession. The participants were selected regardless of their rank, age, and gender.

3. Result and discussions

Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
I. Teachers Takeaways	
A. Flexibility	Accessible
	Convenient
B. Labor-intensive	Time-consuming

Figure 1: The Thematic Analysis of the Views of Private School Teachers in Online Teaching

Figure 1 shows the thematic analysis of the views of private school teachers on online teaching revealing two main themes based on the teachers' takeaways: flexibility and labor-intensive aspects. The flexibility theme is characterized by the perceived accessibility and convenience of online teaching. The teachers view online teaching as a flexible option that can be adapted to their schedules and teaching styles, making it convenient for both them and their students. Additionally, the participants expressed that online time was very convenient because online teaching allowed them to do things. They could also manage their time in teaching, which is more accessible than in an actual class. It provided them with more time to prepare their materials as they did not create content (Srinivasan et al., 2021; Yeung & Yau, 2022; Kim, 2020).

On the other hand, the labor-intensive theme highlights the time-consuming nature of online teaching while online teaching offers flexibility, it also requires a significant investment of time and effort, particularly in preparing materials, managing online platforms, and interacting with students remotely. It was also very hard because there were a lot of barriers like unstable internet connectivity and additional budget incurred as alternatives because they spent much of their in time troubleshooting the issues of technology in teaching (Owen & Demb, 2004; Ferri et al., 2020). Overall, the analysis indicates a nuanced view of online teaching, recognizing its benefits in terms of flexibility and convenience but also acknowledging the challenges and demands it places on teachers. Private school teachers have the same idea of how online teaching is absolute (Stracke et al., 2022).

Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
I. Emotional Challenges	
A. Intrapersonal	Motivations
	Self-improvement
B. Hardships	Struggles
	Difficulties

Figure 2: The Thematic Analysis of the Feelings of Private School Teacher About Online Teaching

The thematic analysis of the feelings of private school teachers about online teaching reveals two primary themes under the category of "Emotional Challenges": intrapersonal motivations and hardships. The intrapersonal motivation's theme encompasses self-improvement and motivations, indicating that teachers see online teaching as an opportunity for personal growth and development. Despite the challenges, teachers view online teaching as a means to enhance their teaching skills and adapt to new teaching methods. In addition, the participants felt excited and glad when they were about to engage in the online class because this experience can provide them a new opportunity and new way of teaching and becoming unique. They also felt that this transition had a lot of advantages that could help them grow and develop in different areas of learning and teaching (Kim & Asbury, 2020; Kaihoi et al., 2022).

When the online course was already in the situation, they expressed many emotions. The hardships' theme, which includes struggles and difficulties, highlights the challenges teachers face in online teaching. They exuded negative feelings because they experienced unfamiliar feelings, stressed, drained, tired, and exhausted both emotionally and mentally. They could no longer teach well and give back to teaching energy. These challenges can range from technical issues, such as unreliable internet connections, to pedagogical challenges, like the difficulty in engaging students remotely and adapting to the absence of immediate feedback while online teaching presents unique opportunities for self-improvement, it also poses significant challenges that require teachers to adapt and innovate in their teaching methods (Hassan et al., 2020; Choi & Chung, 2021).

Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
I.Personal Struggles	
A. Resourceful	Innovation Helpfulness
B. Hindrances	Complicated Distress

Figure 3: The Thematic Analysis of the Effects of Online Teaching to Private School

The thematic analysis of the effects of online teaching on private schools identifies two main themes under the category of "Personal Struggles": resourcefulness and hindrances. The resourcefulness theme is characterized by innovation, helpfulness, and a sense of being resourceful in adapting to the challenges of online teaching while private schools may initially face difficulties in transitioning to online teaching, they are finding ways to innovate and help their students and teachers navigate this new environment. This could involve developing new teaching methodologies, leveraging technology to improve learning outcomes, or providing additional support to students to ensure they can succeed in a remote learning setting (Borup et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the hindrances' theme includes being complicated, distress, and facing difficulties. This indicates that the transition to online teaching has not been without its challenges. These could range from technical issues, such as ensuring all students have access to reliable internet and the necessary devices, to pedagogical challenges, like the difficulty in maintaining student engagement and motivation in a remote learning environment. While private schools are making efforts to adapt to online teaching, they are also facing significant obstacles that require careful consideration and strategic planning to overcome. These challenges highlight the importance of investing in digital infrastructure, teacher training, and support systems to ensure the success of online education for students and teachers alike (Ahmed & Opoku, 2022; Roddy et al., 2017).

Moreover, several negative impacts emerged concerning the application of technology. It became more complicated because not all teachers knew how to use the gadgets well. In addition, the participants also experienced difficulties adapting to the new transition of teaching delivery mode and to keep their teaching efficiency in this time of the pandemic. They had to do several teaching adjustments and techniques to cater to the changing teaching situations. Since they worked from home, they had difficulty maintaining effective teaching and learning. Choosing the applicable teaching mode to access quickly what they needed but because of the protocols imposed by the government and health department they were having a hard time adjusting themselves (Haleem et al., 2022; Mishra et al., 2020). However, participants perceived online teaching as a positive experience because it made them better teachers, gives a lot of learning, developed to improve their skills, and provided quality education despite this pandemic. It was also realized how vital technologies are in 21st-century learners (Alismail, 2023).

4. Contributions of the study

The study contributes significantly to the understanding of the experiences of private school teachers in General Santos City during the transition to online teaching. It provides insights into the challenges and opportunities that educators face in adapting to online instruction, shedding light on the emotional and intellectual impacts of this shift. By focusing on the lived experiences of educators, the study offers a nuanced perspective on the phenomenon of online teaching, highlighting both the difficulties and the benefits experienced by teachers. This research is particularly valuable in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, where the shift to online education has become a global phenomenon. It contributes to the broader discourse on the effectiveness and implications of online learning, emphasizing the importance of qualitative research in capturing the complexities of educational experiences.

5. Key findings of the study

Challenges and Conveniences: The study found that while online teaching presents significant challenges, it also offers numerous conveniences. Educators expressed a wide range of emotions during the transition, yet identified numerous advantages that facilitated personal growth and development. Enhanced Skills and Continuous Learning: Notably, online teaching was found to enhance educators' skills and foster continuous learning. This suggests that despite the difficulties, online platforms can serve as a catalyst for professional advancement and excellence.

Resilience and Adaptability: The study underscores the resilience and adaptability of private school teachers in General Santos City amidst the challenges posed by online teaching. Despite the difficulties encountered, participants remained motivated and optimistic about the potential of online platforms as a novel teaching modality.

Emotional and Intellectual Well-being: The findings suggest that online teaching presents an opportunity for educators to expand their pedagogical repertoire, improve their skills, and nurture their emotional and intellectual well-being.

6. Primary data research

The study utilized primary data through individual in-depth interviews with six online educators in General Santos City. This method was chosen for its ability to capture the rich, detailed, and personal experiences of the participants, providing a deep understanding of their lived experiences in online teaching. The interviews were recorded and transcribed with the participants' consent, ensuring the authenticity and reliability of the data. The use of primary data allowed for a detailed exploration of the participants' perceptions, emotions, and effects of transitioning to online instruction, which would not have been possible through secondary data sources.

7. Implications of the study

The implications of the study are multifaceted, touching on both the educational and broader societal contexts.

Educational context: The study highlights the importance of understanding the lived experiences of educators in the transition to online teaching. It underscores the need for educational institutions to support teachers in adapting to new teaching modalities, recognizing the challenges and leveraging the opportunities that come with online instruction. This is crucial for maintaining the quality of education and ensuring that students continue to receive high-quality instruction despite the shift to online learning.

Societal context: Beyond the educational sphere, the study's findings have broader implications for society. It emphasizes the resilience and adaptability of educators in the face of significant changes, suggesting that these qualities are essential for navigating future disruptions. The study also highlights the potential for online teaching to foster personal growth and development among educators, suggesting that the shift to online instruction can have positive effects on the well-being and professional development of educators.

8. Recommendations and suggestions

Based on the findings and implications of the study, several recommendations and suggestions can be made:

Support and training for educators: Educational institutions should provide comprehensive support and training for educators transitioning to online teaching. This includes technical support for using online platforms, pedagogical training to adapt teaching methods to the online environment, and emotional support to help educators navigate the challenges of the transition.

Investment in technology and infrastructure: To facilitate the shift to online teaching, there is a need for investment in technology and infrastructure. This includes providing educators with access to reliable internet connections and devices, as well as developing and maintaining online platforms that are user-friendly and supportive of effective teaching.

Policy and regulatory support: Policymakers and regulatory bodies should consider the unique challenges and opportunities presented by online teaching. This includes developing policies that support the professional development of educators and ensure that online instruction is equitable and accessible to all students.

Research and development: Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of online teaching on educators and students. This includes studies on the impact of online teaching on student outcomes, the sustainability of online teaching practices, and the development of new pedagogical approaches that are effective in the online environment.

Collaboration and community building: Educators, institutions, and policymakers should engage in collaborative efforts to support the transition to online teaching. This includes sharing best practices, developing common standards for online instruction, and building a community of educators who can support each other in navigating the challenges of online teaching.

9. Conclusion

The lived experiences of private school teachers in online teaching has revealed that being motivated, optimistic and look always to the other side is very important in adapting new way of teaching and strive for greater advancement to become better educators. Despite the many difficulties and challenges they have faced during online teaching, the study found that online teachers remained positive and took it as a bigger opportunity to learn new methodology, enhance their skills and develop also their emotional and intellectual well-being.

The shift to online teaching has highlighted the need for continuous adaptation, innovation, and support from both private schools and educational institutions. While there have been efforts to mitigate the challenges through institutional training and self-learning tools, the overall effectiveness and satisfaction with online teaching remain low. This underscores the importance of ongoing efforts to address the digital skills gap, improve online assessment methods, and provide adequate support for both teachers and students to ensure the successful implementation of online education.

ORCID

Rhona Marielle Abayon https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8787-58504328

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