

Challenges and Opportunities: The Pandemic Version Offering for the Graduate Students' Preparedness

Dr. Vicente Jose V. Suarez II
Education Program Supervisor
Division of Dapitan City, Philippines
vicentejosesuarezii@yahoo.com

Abstract: The challenges that face those in the middle of the pandemic are undeniable. The education system has been severely impacted, with lockdowns and all institutions closing. Teachers who chose to pursue education as a means of professional development have adapted to the most cutting-edge types of online communication, using tools like Google Meet and Zoom. The data shows neither agreement nor disagreement with the challenges stated and agreement with opportunities because the study used a descriptive correlational design. The socio-demographic profiles have not shown any correlation with opportunities or challenges, much less the relationship between opportunities and challenges. Null hypotheses should be retained as there is insufficient evidence to support their rejection; instead, it should be assumed that there exist negligible associations. So, the teachers can't say for sure that they were affected by the problems the pandemic caused, but they are confident enough to say that they took advantage of the chances it gave them.

Keywords: Challenges, Graduate Students, Opportunities, Pandemic Version, Preparedness

Main Text

I-Introduction

Coronavirus illness, also known as Covid-19, is a serious health issue that is currently affecting many aspects of society, including daily living, employment, and the global educational system. The World Health Organization reports that it first occurred in Wuhan City, China, in December 2019. (WHO) On January 30, 2020, (2021) proclaimed COVID-19 a global state of emergency epidemic on March 11, 2020 (Özüdoğru,2021). Beginning in December 2019, the widespread continued to worsen until mid-March 2020 (Reyes, 2021).

After quite a time when people confined themselves to the four corners of their homes due to the pandemic, numerous opportunities have come their way, particularly in the context of education. Despite many problems and what may appear to be risk factors such as contamination, the battle to survive the horrific devastation has been won. The experiences brought by the pandemic are challenging. A need to counter in order to survive, but with extra caution and a logical approach in every attempt to solve the specific situation. Although the government has accelerated its initiative to combat the virus's massive spread, each state remains an individual responsible for containing the spread. At first, emotional distress and anxiety were likely to be heard and felt, requesting monetary assistance from the government for survival, particularly for categorically low-income families. It was answered quickly by all means and was definitely put down to daily needs.

Opportunities have emerged in the field of learning despite the pandemic. Teachers transformed the traditional strategy to the most essential one. To engage students in studying and break down complex subjects into simpler ones, they produced activity sheets with attractive and colorful pictures rather than using outdated visual aids and resources. Additionally, they are encouraged using any kind of technology when it aids in classroom instruction. According to Magsambol (2020) as cited Ancheta and Ancheta (2020), there is a clear disparity between those who can afford the resources to use the new education platform and those who cannot. As seen, teachers are now considerably more creative than they used to be even getting technology needs budget. This platform is a challenge to both teachers and students since it introduces something novel to them (Ancheta & Ancheta, 2020). It was not only experience in basic education, but in tertiary education. The difficulties that tertiary institutions confront can be divided into three categories: social, educational, and technological, taking into account both the categories and the obstacles (Gurajena, et al., n.d).

While the pandemic is considered the cause of their difficulties in their work station, they never felt it a burden in the development of their career as a teacher. They believe if spending time engaging in graduate studies is given priority, soon they will grow professionally and fully-equipped with the kind of wisdom capable of managing the schools in the future. Although there are technological adjustments from face-to-face classes with the professors, the college or university utilizes an online platform. It is adherence to the implementing health protocols according to category level in the province. However, despite numerous challenges confronted during the time of Saturday classes, like unstable signal and technical difficulties both from the server and the user, it was found to be cost-effective. The teachers will no longer travel at the expense of spending a considerable amount on incidental expenses. It sounds advantageous and favorable for them. Some teachers, as novices in computer manipulation, become exceptional in other areas, like sending emails and keeping abreast of applications like Zoom and Google Meet for meetings and classes online. The rapid advancements in technology made it necessary to update schooling (Mahyoob, 2020). These developments promote a good avenue to further aim their professional growth as teachers. They needed to learn at any time and in any location if they wanted to succeed (Wolfinger, 2016). Because they are native speakers of the technology language, today's learners, according to Prensky (2001), are completely different from their forefathers.

Looking back to what disadvantages were experienced a few years ago, concealing opportunities that were supposed to be enjoyed, advantages occurred. It is not only about the aspect of embracing the modernization of gadgets in the utilization of various educational approaches, but the care and versatility to deal with any unprecedented dilemma. Due to the excellent opportunity for knowledge and interaction with educational technology tools like mobile-based learning, computer-based learning, and web-based learning that both students and teachers have experienced, there are fewer barriers to accessing online learning today (Pellegrini, Mirella, Vladimir Uskov, & Casalino, 2020; Byun, Sooyeon, & Slavin, 2020) as cited in Mahyoob (2020). Advantages are there as fully equipped individuals to classify work and family and are able to navigate to adapt to the best of themselves. Thus, the pandemic has a version to give teachers a significant development opportunity for their managerial skills and knowledge when given the chance.

The study focuses on the teachers who want to enroll for thesis writing courses and examines the extent to which their challenges throughout the pandemic emerged into spectacular opportunities to handle things for their own writing survival. In order to respond appropriately to the teachers, the researcher first analyzes potential difficulties based on relevant literature that is

relevant to the study's environment. To become a full-fledged master's degree holder, however, one must take advantage of the chances that arise from each obstacle, regardless of whether it has a beneficial effect on their graduate studies.

2. Framework

This research anchors on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1988), which states that the best method to predict behavior is to ask people if they want to behave in a specific way. It is noted that the purpose of providing convenience to schooling will not manifest itself in behavior if the conduct is physically challenging to accomplish or if unanticipated difficulties stand in a stringent way. The theory was developed to describe all actions that people can exercise self-control over. This model's most important element is behavioral intent, which is impacted by attitudes toward the likelihood that a behavior will result in the desired outcome and a subjective assessment of the risks and advantages of that outcome. Accordingly, despite how tragic the time the pandemic strikes, each person can deal with it what he believes safe and reasonable. It is adherence the government's effort to primarily performed precautionary measure in all its undertaking for security.

Studies on the challenges associated in learning contexts like remote education, online learning, and electronic learning are insufficiently common in the literature (Özüdoğru,2021). Since they were unable to use the technologies employed in distance learning to teach before the epidemic, the majority of teachers have begun to test out a new strategy (Bonk, 2020). However, how to organize new technologies in teaching and learning is the primary difficulty in distance learning.

3. Statement of the Problem

The study intends to look into the challenges the teachers confronted in carrying out their duties during the pandemic and how they turned out to be chances for their professional development while they were in the service. According to the title's iteration, the pandemic has significantly impacted the respondents' ability to write a thesis due to their individual development of previously unpossessed capabilities.

Specifically, it delved to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the socio-demographic profile of the teachers in terms of:
 - 1.1. sex;
 - 1.2. length of service; and
 - 1.3. position?
2. What is the level of challenges met by the respondents?
3. What is the level of opportunities the respondents developed during the pandemic?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the challenges and socio-demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 4.1. sex;
 - 4.2. length of service; and
 - 4.3. position?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the challenges and socio-demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 5.1. sex;
 - 5.2. length of service; and

5.3. position?

6. Is there a significant relationship between the challenges and opportunities of the respondents during the pandemic?

Null Hypotheses

The researcher strongly adhered to the following hypotheses in the investigation to carry out evidence for their rejection.

H₀₁. There is no significant relationship between the challenges and socio-demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:

H_{0 1.1}. sex;

H_{0 1.2}. length of service; and

H_{0 1.3} position.

H₀₂. There is no significant relationship between the opportunities and socio-demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:

H_{0 2.1}. sex;

H_{0 2.2}. length of service; and

H_{0 2.3} position.

H₀₃. There is no significant relationship between the challenges and opportunities of the respondents during the pandemic.

IV- Research Methodology

This section outlines the research design, study respondents, questionnaire and statistical tool needed to presents the components of trustworthy findings and conclusions.

Research Design

The study used a descriptive-correlational research design. It Presented both challenges and opportunities through a likert scale with verbal descriptions. On the other hand, respondents' socio-demographic profiles correlated with the challenges and opportunities that made the study correlational, which also included investigating whether the two variables posted a relationship.

Research Respondents

Those who plan to pursue thesis writing in Master of Educational Management (MAEM) at Dipolog Medical Center Incorporated (DMCI) anytime during the next school year were investigated. They are all teachers in basic education in different provinces, but the majority are in the province of Zamboanga del Norte. Among the total population, only 40 were selected through simple random sampling. Although it appeared that purposive sampling was used because only teachers with a complete academic requirements status were chosen, the method used to select the respondents was a probability because it was considered a 90 percent confidence level representation. Keep in mind that the two ethical considerations that must be upheld are data confidentiality and unanimous representation.

Research Questionnaire

A researcher-made questionnaire was used in this study, and both parts, namely, challenges and opportunities, were responded to on the Likert Scale with Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Validation and reliability testing were observed. 81 Cronbach's Alpha for challenges and .84 for opportunities yielded by a pilot by a group of teachers in a district not covered in the study. Three components make up the tool. Socio-demographics like sex, age, and length of service are Part I, challenges for Part II, and opportunities for Part III.

Statistical Treatment of the Data

The collected data consisted of categorical and numerical variables, and their treatments were carried out using the appropriate tool. Involving sex, point-biserial was used, and Pearson r for length of service, and chi-square for teachers' position. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient, on the other hand, was posted for the variables challenges and opportunities, taking into account their ordinal nature.

Results and Discussions

This part of the study would present the results that anchored on the statement of the problems.

The sociodemographic profile of the respondents, including their sex, length of service, and position, is shown in Table 1. Only 14 (35%) of the males and 26 (65%) of the females account for the majority. There are just two for those with 6 to 10 years of service and 12 for those with 11 years or more; therefore, most of them are in their first to fifth years. Teacher I to III positions have the most numbers, with a total of 30, two master teachers, and eight head teachers.

Table 1

The Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	14	35
Female	26	65
Total	40	100
Length of Service		
1-5 years	26	65
6-10 year	2	5
11 and above years	12	30
Total	40	100
Position		
Teacher I-III	30	75
Master Teacher I-II	2	5
Head Teacher I-VI	8	20
Total	40	100

Table 2 gives the weighted means in descending order in each statement that refers to the challenges the respondents met during their online graduate schooling amidst the pandemic. Item 8, which demands a referral from the expert in their thesis writing, has the highest mean of 4.35 with a “Strongly Agree” description. Item 10 is marked "Agree," while items 9, 1, 4, and 5 are marked "Neither Agree nor Disagree." The challenges never present a clear manifestation to interfere with their studies, like Saturday obligations other than the online class, their locations to access the internet, household chores, or visitors that may create interruptions. Item 6, 7,3, and 2 display the Verbal Descriptions (VD) of “Disagree” or disagreement. There seem to be no problems in converting files, task delegations, computer or device expertise, and suitability. The overall mean is 2.77 with the VD of Neither Agree nor Disagree

Table 2

The Challenges of the Respondents Met During Online Graduate Schooling

Statement	Weighted Mean (WM)	Verbal Description (VD)
8. Due to the demanding and rigorous work schedule at school, I think future work on my thesis will require a referral from the expert.	4.35	Strongly Agree
10. Compared to my prior Internet charges, I spent a larger load budget.	3.65	Agree
9. On Saturdays, I have obligations that prevent me from concentrating on my studies.	3.20	Neither Agree nor Disagree
1. My location and unpredictable service made it challenging for me to connect online.	2.90	Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. The household chores and other daily tasks have interfered with my actual online classes.	2.89	Neither Agree nor Disagree
5. Because of many factors, such as interruptions from visitors, I could hardly finish each lecture of the professor.	2.65	Neither Agree nor Disagree
6. I delegated the tasks to family members because I have no experience posting files for assignments.	2.10	Disagree
7. Converting and downloading files is a challenging task	2.05	Disagree
3. I can't respond to the professor's quizzes and assignments right away since I can't type fast enough on the device.	1.95	Disagree
2. My device is not suitable for the online course.	1.94	Disagree

1.00-1.80- Strongly Disagree, 1.90-2.60- Disagree, 2.61-3.40- Neither Agree nor Disagree, 3.41-4.20- Agree, 4.21-5.00 Strongly Agree

Overall Mean = 2.77

Verbal Description = Neither Agree nor Disagree

Table 3 shows the different opportunities evolved during the pandemic taking considerations of the levels of challenges. The presentation in the table is descending order which posts from the highest means to the lowest. Item 10 gives a strongly agree, as the pandemic offers chances to learn many things that have never discovered before. For items 9,3,8,5,1,4,6, and 2 give a VD of "Agree". Some significant findings are they never rely to anybody about the downloading and uploading of files for their assignments, improved their typing skills, have the abilities to work with their thesis, enough signal for the Online class, handle household chores while attending a class, and having been in the google to do research and readings. In today's digital age, online learning, blended learning, social media and open learning are critical developments for an effective teaching (Bates, 2018)

Table 3

The Opportunities that the Pandemic Could Offer Graduate Students

Statement	Weighted Mean (WM)	Verbal Description (VD)
10. The pandemic gives me the chance to learn a lot of things that would undoubtedly never have been discovered in the absence of this event.	4.35	Strongly Agree
9. I have never relied on anyone other than myself to upload and download my work or educational resources.	4.00	Agree
3. I've improved my typing to answer to lectures right away.	4.00	Agree
8. Thanks to the abilities I've earned through distant learning, I can work on my thesis with my advisor.	3.95	Agree
5. I have purchased laptops or other technology that is appropriate for any online course.	3.80	Agree
1. To ensure an uninterrupted signal during May class, I have a reliable connection.	3.80	Agree
4. I can handle some housework while I'm listening to the lectures.	3.65	Agree
6. I am an expert user of the Google Meet and Zoom services.	3.50	Agree
2. In order to complete projects and meet criteria, I have been conducting ongoing research and reading a lot of material.	3.45	Agree
7. Despite taking online programs, my businesses are managed well	3.25	Neither Agree nor Disagree

1.00-1.80- Strongly Disagree, 1.90-2.60- Disagree, 2.61-3.40- Neither Agree nor Disagree, 3.41-4.20- Agree, 4.21-5.00 Strongly Agree

Overall Mean = 3.79

Verbal Description = Agree

Challenges and sex are correlated and are presented in Table 4. The point-biserial was used to compute the variable correlation and found out that the computed $r_{tb} = .01$ with a p-value of .97

greater than the alpha level of .05. It also demonstrates that there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, which maintains the no-significant relationship between these variables.

Table 4

The Relationship Between Challenges and Sex

Variables	Coefficient of Correlation	p-value
Challenges and Sex	$r_{pb}=.01$.97

* $p < .05$, significant

Table 5 presents the relationship between challenges and length of service. The $X^2(1, N = 40) = .005$, $p = .94$. The presentation explains that the evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis is insufficient, and as a result of the failure, it explains that graduate students' challenges have no influence on how long they serve in their workplace, whether it is a public or private institution or college.

Table 5

The Relationship Between Challenges and Length of Service

Variables Length of Service	Challenges		X^2	p-values
	SA/A/NA nor DA	DA/SDA		
1-5 & 6-10 years	16	7	0.005	.94
11 years & Above	12	5		

* $p < .05$, significant

The relationship between challenges and positions is shown in Table 6. The presentation, $X^2(1, N = 40) = .005$, $p = .94$, fails to reject the null hypothesis as there is not enough evidence to suggest since the p-value of .94 is greater than the alpha level of .05. The challenges have not been attributed to whether the graduate studies occupied the higher or lower position in their respective stations, regardless of what positions the graduate studies took.

Table 6

The Relationship Between Challenges and Positions

Variables Position	Challenges		X^2	p-values
	SA/A/NA nor DA	DA/SDA		
Teacher I-III	23	7	2.54	.11
Master Teacher I- II/Head Teacher I-IV	5	5		

Table 7 shows that the correlation coefficient $r_{pb} = -.243$, with a p-value of .303 greater than the alpha level of .05 which happens to fail to reject the null hypothesis of no significant relationship. There is insufficient evidence for its rejection. The findings reveal that opportunities have no association with whether a person is male or female. In general, their gender will have no bearing on the opportunities available to them under any circumstances.

Table 7

The Relationship Between Opportunities and Sex

Opportunities and Sex	p-value	Remark
$r_{pb} = -.243$.303	Not Significant

* $p < .05$, significant

As presented in Table 8, the computed $X^2(1, N = 40) = .901$, $p = .34$ gives the interpretation that the null hypothesis of no significant relationship will retain since the p-value is greater than an alpha of .05. Evidence to support its rejection is not manifested, thus, opportunities missed to associate the length of service the teachers posted.

Table 8

The Relationship Between the Opportunities and Length of Service

Variables Length of Service	Opportunities		X^2	p-values
	SA	A/ NA nor DA/DA/SDA		
1-5 & 6-10 years	5	18	0.901	.34
11 years & Above	6	11		

* $p < .05$, significant

Table 9 presents the relationship between opportunities and positions. The computed $X^2(1, N = 40) = .120$, $p = .729$ shows insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between opportunities and positions. Whatever positions the teachers are in, these will unlikely be a determinant of the number of opportunities to be availed, particularly from the pandemic experience.

Table 9

The Relationship Between Opportunities and Positions

Variables Position	Opportunities		X^2	p-values
	SA/A	NA nor DA/DS/SDA		
Teacher I-III	14	16	0.120	.729

Master Teacher I- II/Head Teacher I- IV	5	5
11 years & Above	6	11

* $p < .05$, significant

The relationship between challenges and opportunities is exhibited in Table 10. It presents $r(38) = -.195$, $p = .410$. Based on the data and statistical calculation, there is no sufficient evidence to suggest that the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected and, instead, will be retained. This shows that no matter how hard things were for teachers during the pandemic, there were any good things that came out of it. Various opportunities would arise, but they would not be directly related to their challenges.

Table 10

The Relationship Between Challenges and Opportunities

Variables	Coefficient Correlation	p-value
Challenges and Opportunities	$r_s = -.195$.410

* $p < .05$, significant

Conclusions

Most of the teachers who responded to the study were female and had between one and five years of experience teaching in positions I and III. One of the challenges was that they had to seek and request an expert to write their thesis because of the demanding and intense work schedule at school. However, it was not made clear if they were referring to the adviser or anyone else qualified to supervise scholarly work. Regarding the degree of difficulties encountered during the online graduate course, they do not agree or disagree that these issues exist. They might be able to manage not only their thesis writing but also the Internet connectivity and extra costs associated with the online course. Despite the pandemic, they have several options that significantly advance their academic endeavors. They discovered some things that would have never been discovered without this occurrence. Opportunities include participating in various online learning environments like Google Meet and Zoom. Their challenges and opportunities have nothing to do with sex. Based on the facts, neither a male nor a female can be attributed to these variables. Other than that, regardless of how long they have been teachers, they would never have the study's substantial relationships with the variables. Positions do not also provide a meaningful relationship to the same idea. The inference that opportunities and challenges are not related among the population of teachers who intend to pursue their thesis writing in the future is based on the fact that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that there is a statistically significant association between the challenges correlated to opportunities.

References

Icek Ajzen, The theory of planned behavior, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Volume 50, Issue 2, 1991,

- Magsambol, B. (2020). Over 200,000 students transfer from private to public schools amid pandemic. Available online at <https://rappler.com/nation/students-private-schools-transfer-to-public-coronavirus-pandemic>.
- Ancheta, R. & Ancheta H. (2020). The New Normal in Education: A Challenge to Private Basic Education Institutions in the Philippines?
- Mahyoob, M. (2020). Challenges of e-Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic Experienced by EFL Learners. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no4.23>
- Wolfinger, S. (2016). An exploratory case study of middle school student academic achievement in a fully online virtual school (Doctoral dissertation, Drexel University). Drexel University.
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. From On the Horizon. MCB University Press, 9(5), 1-6.
- Pellegrini, M., Uskov, V., & Casalino, N. (2020). Reimagining and Re-Designing the Post-COVID-19 Higher Education Organizations to Address New Challenges and Responses for Safe and Effective Teaching Activities. Law and Economics Yearly Review Journal, 219-248.
- Byun, S. & Slavin, R. E. (2020). Educational Responses to the COVID-19 Outbreak in South Korea. Best Evid Chin Edu, 5(2), 665-680.
- Bates, A. W. T. (2018). Teaching in a digital age: Guidelines for designing teaching and learning. Tony Bates Associates Ltd, Vancouver BC.
- Bonk, C. J. (2020) Pandemic ponderings, 30 years to today: Synchronous signals, saviors, or survivors?, Distance Education, 41(4), 589-599.
- Özüdoğru, G. (2021). Problems faced in distance education during Covid-19 Pandemic. <https://doi.org/10.17275/per.21.92.8.4>
- Gurajena, C., Mbunge, E., & Fashoto, S. (n.d.). Teaching and Learning in the new normal: opportunities and challenges of Distance Learning amid COVID-19 pandemic 1 Caroline Gurajena, 1 Elliot Mbunge, 1 Stephen G Fashoto
- Sangrà, D. Vlachopoulos, and N. Cabrera, "Building an inclusive definition of elearning: An approach to the conceptual framework," Int. Rev. Res. Open Distance Learn., vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 145–159, 2012, doi: 10.19173/irrodl.v13i2.1161
- Reyes, R. R. (2021). Parental Challenges and School Performance of Junior High School Students in Distance Learning Modality. International Journal of Research in Engineering, Science and Management, 4(7), 71–76. Retrieved from <http://www.journals.resaim.com/ijresm/article/view/967>

