UNDERSTANDING THE ESSENCE OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES EMPLOYING SELF-LEARNING MODULES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT
This qualitative study was undertaken and employed hermeneutic phenomenology. It described the essence of the experiences of the grade six teachers in Malapatan Central Elementary School in employing self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic. Five participants underwent an in-depth interview to discover their lived experiences analyzed thematically. The data gathered were categorized into three main themes: coping with the difficulties in the new normal through a passion for teaching, optimism in the face of adversities, and alienation from job, pupils, and from oneself. The study concluded that massive, sudden changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic caused difficulties in the lives of the teachers as they were separated from their actual roles as educators, even leading to alienation from their profession, their pupils, and themselves. Nevertheless, the teachers remained optimistic, determined to find ways to cope with these challenges because deep within their hearts lies their passion for teaching.

KEYWORDS: Experiences, teachers, self-learning modules, covid-19 pandemic, Philippines

INTRODUCTION
The rapid proliferation of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has affected the Philippine economy and other sectors. The pandemic has severely impacted the country's educational system. Classes were suspended immediately at all levels in most regions as early as the second week of March 2020 (CNN, 2020). The Department of Education presented blended learning as an alternative for the new normal in the educational system. Blended learning combines various distance learning modalities such as printed modules, online digital modules, and TV and Radio-based instruction (Esguerra, 2020; Sahoo, 2020; Shivacheva and Nedeva, 2016; Schneider and Council, 2021).

Even before the pandemic, the education sector widely used blended learning worldwide. There is a large amount of literature about blended learning, including Padmapiyarat’s (2015) study about self-learning modules. In the study, the proponent sought to determine the effectiveness of self-learning modules on secondary students’ achievement. The proponent used an experimental method with a pretest-posttest non-equivalent group design.

One group design contains students who used the modular approach, while the other used the activity-oriented method. In the findings, students who used the modular system achieved higher means scores than those who used the activity-oriented method. This study revealed that school administrators should take necessary steps in giving teachers special training in developing modular packages. Although there have been numerous studies on the effectiveness of self-learning modules in student learning, there were few studies on the experiences of those who use them. Additionally, the literature on using self-learning modules during a pandemic has been limited because the world rarely experiences a pandemic.

Hence, the purpose of this undertaking was to unearth the experiences of teachers who used the self-learning module during the school year 2020-2021. Particularly relevant are the experiences of public elementary school teachers. The study’s specific goal was to learn about the participants’ attitudes and feelings toward using self-learning modules during COVID-19 learning and how the self-learning modules affected their teaching. In the Philippines, the self-learning modules were the most sought-after modality because of digital inequality.

Accordingly, this study expected participants to talk more about the inconveniences they had experienced in employing the self-learning module delivery of learning. Furthermore, the researcher sought the ones they experienced during the printing of the modules and the physical delivery or distribution and retrieval of the modules to respective pick-up points. Printing and photocopying machines are limited and not updated in most public schools. In the physical delivery or distribution and retrieval of the modules, for apparent reasons, the participants have a high chance of exposing themselves to the virus during these phases.
Moreover, despite the inconveniences caused by the modules, this study expected participants to view self-learning modules as a convenient way of teaching, mainly because all the lessons are in the modules.

Purpose Statement
This study aimed to grasp the essence of grade six teachers' experiences using self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic at Malapatan Central Elementary School. This study aimed to get the meaning of their experiences using self-learning modules in classroom instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. For educators, the transition from traditional face-to-face learning to online learning can be a completely different experience. They must adapt to it with few or no other options available. Educators worldwide have felt the unexpected ripple effect of the COVID-19 pandemic as schools have been closed to deal with the global pandemic. While governments, frontline workers, and health officials work tirelessly to contain the outbreak, education systems strive to continue providing high-quality education to all students during these trying times. Many teachers have experienced psychological and emotional distress, rendering them unable to engage in productive activities. Hence, the teachers lived experiences should undertake an investigation.

Research Questions
This study aimed to understand the essence of the experiences of grade six teachers of Malapatan Central Elementary School in employing self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic. It sought to answer the following questions:
1. How do participants describe the essence of their experiences employing a self-learning module in teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?
   1.1. How do the participants view the essence of their experiences employing self-learning modules during COVID-19 learning?
   1.2. How do the participants feel the essence of their experiences employing self-learning modules during COVID-19?
   1.3. How does the essence of their experiences employing self-learning modules affect their teaching?

Theoretical Lens
Marylene Gagné, Edward Deci, and Richard Ryan's (2018) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a broad theory of human personality and motivation that focuses on how individuals interact with and influence their social environment. SDT defines intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and explains how these motivations affect situational responses in various domains and social, cognitive, and personality development. SDT is grounded humanistic assumption that people naturally and actively strive for self-organization and growth.

In other words, people strive to broaden and comprehend themselves by incorporating new experiences, cultivating their needs, desires, and interests, and connecting with others and the outside world. People can be dominated, divided, and alienated if their core psychological demands for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are disrupted by an inadequate social context, according to SDT. Due to this person-environment interplay, people become either engaged, curious, connected, and whole, or demotivated, ineffective, and detached (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The theory became the anchor on the recommendations of this study.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
This section presents the related literatures which are useful and necessary in any research and intensive undertaking. These provided significant data and additional needed information obtained from books, journals, unpublished thesis, and internet sources based on the results of several studies relative to this endeavor.

Challenges in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning
The shift from face-to-face teaching and learning to distance learning has received widespread support from student teachers in light of the pandemic. However, because of the quick implementation of online learning, learners and teachers were unprepared mentally, financially, socially. On the technical aspect, even teachers encountered difficulties related to technological approaches. Also, the challenge is primarily within individuals; this deficiency of unpreparedness of human resources to the sudden change of environment and mode of education. (Sahoo, 2020; Shahnama, Yazdanmehr, and ElahiShirvan, 2021).

According to one study, the main challenges for teachers are a lack of required facilities and infrastructure, low technological literacy, and poor internet quality. The interview also revealed that teachers considered improving technological literacy and providing necessary facilities to be the top priorities in addressing the challenges (Mousavi, Saidi and Mahmodi, 2021).

Furthermore, taking into account the categories and barriers during the pandemic, the challenges faced by institutions are divided into technological, pedagogical, and social challenges. Moreover, distance education promotes student-centered learning and self-learning. It provides many opportunities to educational institutions, such as scalability, research innovations, flexible learning, diversity, remote student support, adjustment of assessment methods, the opportunity for innovation, non-academic courses, and changes in pedagogical policies (Gurajena, Mbunge, and Fashoto, 2021; Salyers, Carter, Carter, Myers and Barrett, 2014).

Consequently, one of these required qualifications is digital literacy during the pandemic. Online learning necessitates the effective use of technology and digital or computer skills. Furthermore, individuals with low levels of digital literacy are unlikely to continue benefiting from web-based knowledge in online learning contexts. The term "digital literacy" first
The printed modular learning materials facilitate the student learning process (Pribadi and Susilana, 2021; Asgar and Satyanarayana, 2021; Yuliani, Wiji and Mulyani, 2021).

The Department of Education (DepEd) suggested that modules include motivation and assessment sections that serve as a comprehensive guide for the teacher's and students' desired competencies. However, self-learning modules may not be practical. First, without a knowledgeable person who can explain confusing or complicated concepts written in the module, the student would have difficulty understanding it. Second, the lack of a standardized system in drafting module content and limited examples differs from one school or region. Third, not every family has access to gadgets and reliable internet service, so social bonds cannot form between students and teachers. Last, the teachers' lack of feedback once modules have been answered and delivered to them (Estrada, 2021; Mgonja, 2021; Nikonova, Sharonov, Sorokoumova, Suvorova, and Sorokoumova, 2016; Panganiban and Madrigal, 2021).

Also, preparing the devices and tools for teaching in the new normal is essential. Effective command in distance learning requires a range of equipment, including computers, laptops, webcams, and internet modems. However, not all teachers have complete devices to facilitate teaching in distance learning. Generally, the standard devices and tools that the participants are preparing are limited only to laptops, desktops, and pocket WIFI. In the current situation, electronic means an equipment is required to keep the constant communication among students and teachers, distribute educational materials, and access online platforms (Sadeghi, 2019; Brown, 2020).

According to UNESCO (2020), the Institute for Capacity Building in Africa emphasizes the importance of governments' support for teachers. However, since necessity is the key to its success, this situation may present an opportunity for educators and students to become more empowered, creative, and innovative. Furthermore, online training and webinars were available to educators to continue expanding and effectively supporting and guiding their students with their knowledge and wisdom (Global Peace Foundation, 2020).

Agreeing to the educational theory and practice of Joseph Jacotot, one could teach a subject even if he/she did not even know the topic in the first place (Kotsko, 2013). For Jacotot, teaching is not a matter of expertise but determination. Moreover, elementary teachers must be generalists when teaching different subject matters (Heggart, 2016). It is an essential requirement for elementary school teachers to graduate from general education courses, particularly Bachelor of Elementary Education. For those teachers who have difficulties guiding their pupils on subjects that are not of their expertise, it is essential to design methodologies like evaluations and training in order for them not to jeopardize their teaching.

In the Philippines, Article IV, Section 2 of the Professional Code of Ethics for Teachers, states that each teacher shall fulfill the highest quality education standards. He shall make the best preparations for a career in teaching. Therefore, he should be at his best at all times in the exercise of
his line of work." Meanwhile, Article V states, "Teachers shall, at all times, endowed the spirit of professional devotion, confidence, and belief in one another, self-sacrifice, and service to others" (R.A. 7836).

Passionate teachers are committed to their profession. Beyond their sworn oath, teachers’ passions drive them to find ways to impart learning to their pupils. In his study, Serin (2017) emphasized the role of passion as a motivator for high-quality learning and teaching. Passion is the desire to discover and experience new ideas. In addition to that, passionate teachers create effective learning environments to endeavor to increase the learning potentials of their students.

Coping with the Challenges of the Pandemic

To override the discomfort of unfamiliarity, setting up structures and processes that enhance trust will increase engagement (Pillay, 2014). Before the official implementation of modular learning, schools prepared their teachers for the new normal. Thus, conducting activities such as webinars on topics such as mental health, psycho-social debriefing (Baker, Peele, Daniels, Saybe, Whalen, Overstreet, and The New Orleans, 2021; Cipriano and Brackett, 2020) and the new normal in the Philippines primary education (Luz, 2020).

However, change is inevitable. Sometimes, people know a change will occur. Other times it comes suddenly and unexpectedly. The general population experienced psychological distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Responses to Stress model posit that there are three coping dimensions. One of which is voluntary coping (i.e., coping responses that involve conscious effort, e.g., problem-solving, cognitive restructuring) versus involuntary coping (i.e., temperamentally based and conditioned reactions, e.g., emotional numbing, rumination, intrusive thoughts). Voluntary coping responses are viewed as goal-directed efforts to maintain, increase, or alter one's control over the environment or the self. Despite the difficulties they experience, the teachers are finding ways to cope with the changes in the educational system (Dubow and Rubinlicht, 2011; Gellegan-Alivio, 2021; Castillo, 2021; Gayola and Janer, 2021).

Non-classroom duties are the leading causes of educators’ low morale and professional burnout. Teachers added tasks are to serve committees and fulfill administrative duties. These tasks take their time and energy away from helping their learners learn. Hence, teacher morale could suffer due to the persistent stress of meeting educational objectives or changing leadership or policies. Additional professional development may help teachers feel more confident about accomplishing some of these non-instructional tasks (Clark, 2020; Chaplain, 2008; Johnson and Birkeland, 2003; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2015).

One of the beneficial consequences for mental health from the current pandemic is the opportunity for personal growth. Moreover, it harmonized community, helping project community members’ psychological ties by constructing a sense of community identification and unity during the pandemic, which anticipated increased well-being and reduced depression and anxiety. Personal growth is an experience of psychological development. Thus, successful management of stress and trauma can lead to personal growth, reinforcing the sense of competence and becoming a protective factor for coping with future stressors (Fegert, Vitiello, Plener, and Clemens, 2020; Zoltnner and Maercker, 2006; Modini, Joyce, Mykletun, Christensen, Bryant, Mitchell and Harvey, 2016).

Moreover, teacher morale may suffer due to the constant stress of meeting educational goals or changing leadership or policies. Burnout, even if it is a moderate or significant concern by teachers, with nearly one-quarter indicating that they planned to depart from the teaching profession. As the pandemic dragged on, the adverse effects on teachers’ well-being worsened, as evidenced by three-quarters of teachers reporting lower morale than before the pandemic. School principals, too, have reported low confidence and anxiety (Kaufmanand Diliberti, 2020; Brackett, Cannizzaro, and Levy, 2020; Will, 2021).

Moreover, the professional development of teachers is essential to the successful improvement of education. The professional development of teachers is the position of the future. Their experiences and the new challenges will be needed to face and to guide all students to a higher level of learning and development. In addition, professional development is a continuous process in which individuals practice specific occupations. Participating in continuing professional development has goals: for instance, they are to help teachers change their perceptions or conceptual understanding, as well as their classroom practices, in order to improve student’s learning outcomes. They maximize sustained learning and applicability (Prestridge, 2017; Ibrahim and Kavlu, 2020; Martinet, Gauthier, and Raymond, 2001; Badawi, 2009).

A passionate teacher is defined as someone enamored with the field of knowledge, is ecstatic about the ideas that change the world, and is deeply interested in the potentials and dilemmas of students. Similarly, passionate teachers are enthusiastic about their work. Quality and practical learning require passion. It is a factor that improves teachers’ performance and encourages them to achieve higher levels of student achievement. Teachers who are genuinely enthusiastic about their profession are committed to creating an effective learning environment and improving their students’ learning potential (Serin, 2017; Fried, 2001; Gellegan-Alivio, 2021; Benacquisto, 2021).

Also, the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown teachers into an unpredictable situation. The lockdown has sped up the transition from traditional to online learning practices. Avoiding direct contact with others affected relationships, resulting in their mental health issues. Hence, it is critical to facilitate physical activity at home to prevent health problems among teachers in similar situations in the future. Moreover, training programs in blended or online learning practices would be essential for their successful career advancement. (Aperribai, Cortabarria, Aguirre, Verche, and Borges, 2020).
Perspectives in the Implementation of Modular Distance Learning

The participants’ feelings about their self-learning modules experiences are positive and negative. More importantly, these revealed their optimism in the face of adversities. Maintaining a positive outlook in life amidst the current pandemic is essential to move forward. The teachers may experience emotional distress characterized by demotivation, frustration, burnout, confusion, doubt, fear, and sadness. However, they are still determined and resilient, allowing them to continuously provide their services to the learners with happiness, excitement, and a sense of satisfaction. That is why they feel gratitude when other people see their experiences as something that would help them grow and resentment towards those who saw their experiences as irrelevant.

Being a teacher has traditionally been one of the most stressful professions to undertake. However, they are no strangers to feelings of grief. Thus, teacher well-being contributes significantly to job satisfaction and productivity, benefiting student well-being and academic achievement (Spilt, Koomen, and Thijs, 2011; De Nobile, 2017; Gonzalez, Brown and Slate, 2008). Stress and overall health are essential factors in deciding whether or not to stay in class. The reality that many teachers work in environments hostile to their well-being, and indeed, maintaining well-being when potentially exposed to COVID-19 adds additional stress to the daily role of teachers. (Naghieh, Montgomery, Bonell, Thompson, and Aber, 2015; Dabrowski, 2009).

Teacher wellbeing is vital. Additionally, teachers who experience demotivation and anxiety are less effective in supporting student wellbeing and outcomes. Even though the teaching profession now faces unique problems and demands from students, families, and a constantly changing system, the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to add to the profession's anxiety and weariness (Ferdig, Baumgartner, Hartshorne, Kaplan-Rakowski, and Mouza, 2020; Ozamiz-Etxebarria, Idoiaga Mondragon, Bueno-Notivol, Pérez-Moreno, and Santabárbara, 2021; Dabrowski, 2021).

Furthermore, stress is a common occurrence in the daily life of human beings. With varying degrees of frequency, all individuals have experienced it at some point in their lives. Stress is being under intense pressure or feeling frustrated. Suppose one finds his/herself in situations where he/she has little control over circumstances such as health or illness crises. Such a situation will directly impact his/her overall well-being. Moreover, stress levels have recently increased due to the pandemic. (Urcos, Urcos, Ruales and Urcos, 2020).

Moreover, the pandemic brought the education sector to a fundamental shift in teaching and learning globally. Hence, teachers confront a wide range of challenging circumstances in trying to cope with these changes (Reimers and Schleicher, 2020; Di Fronzo, Costa, Montesano, Di Gruttola, Ciofi, Morgilli, and Bertollo, 2020; Liu, Lithopoulos, Zhang, Garcia-Barrera, and Rhodes, 2021; Guillasper, Soriano, and Oducado, 2020; Mondol and Mohiuddin, 2020; Moralista and Oducado, 2020). Teaching has a rich history of dissatisfaction and upheavals despite its reputation as a noble profession. Previous research has revealed a moderate to a high percentage of stress among teachers and faculty, and staff in low to middle-income countries such as Ethiopia, Macedonia, and the Philippines (Pagayanan, 2016; Tan, 2017; Alson, 2019; Alves, Lopes, and Precioso, 2021; Agai–Demjaha, Bislimovska, and Mijakoski, 2015).

Determination is the desire to accomplish something, and it frequently goes hand in hand with persistence and resilience. It is the ability to persevere in the face of adversity (Ash, 2016; Toste, Raley, Gross Toews, Shogren, and Coelho, 2021; Tuysuz and Ugulu, 2021). Resilience derives from the Latin term resilio, which means “to go back, highlight, and bounce.” As a result, this concept’s incorporation into the social sciences, including psychology and the health sciences, is relatively new. When confronted with the challenge of a crisis experience and stress, resilience is the ability to overcome adversity, adapt, recover, and live a meaningful and productive life (Urcos, Urcos, Ruales, and Urcos, 2020).

The sense of autonomy, self-sufficiency, stability, rational thought process, self-esteem, optimism, happiness, emotional intelligence, meaning, purpose, humor, altruism, love, and compassion are strengths, traits, and coping mechanisms highly correlated with resilience. Teachers can surpass the challenges of employing self-learning modules by keeping a positive outlook to feel these positive emotions (Ackerman, 2021; Noughabi and Amirian, 2021; Kim, Leary, and Asbury, 2020; Kim, Oxley, and Asbury, 2021).

For David (2018), the first concept of alienation identifies a distinct psychological or social ill, explicitly involving a problematic separation between a self and another that should adequately belong together. Marx’s Theory of Alienation introduced the concept of labor alienation. Marx discusses four aspects of labor alienation in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts: alienation from the product of labor, alienation from the activity of work, alienation from one’s specific humanity, and alienation from others, from society (Horowitz, 2011; Kumari, 2021; Øversveen, 2021; Kociatkiewicz, Kostera, and Parker, 2021).

According to Marx’s Theory of Alienation, alienation from the product and labor activity leads to alienation from the self or the human essence. It is not only the product that transforms into an alien power. Moreover, changes in working conditions during a pandemic have negative consequences for employees in alienation from work. (Horowitz, 2011; Guo, Cheng, Luo, and Zhao 2021; Denis, Côté, Fleury, Currie and Spyridonidis, 2021).

Marx’s fourth aspect of alienation contends that alienation from one’s self leads to alienation from other people or society because “human nature” must be understood as “the ensemble of social relations” (Horowitz, 2011). Teachers’ roles have shifted, causing them estrangement from their students. The lack of face-to-face classes and direct communication
between teachers and students prevented teachers from learning more about their students (Li, Fu, Fan, Zhu, and Li, 2021; Atmojo, and Nugroho, 2020).

It stems from the notion that all acts of labor implicate some activity that produces some object, performed by a human being (rather than a work animal or a machine) in some social context. In the context of the teachers’ experiences in self-learning modules, the sudden changes in their environment, particularly the prohibition of face-to-face classes and the centralized production of modules that altered their responsibilities as educators, led to their alienation from their profession, their pupils, and themselves. The COVID-19 Pandemic has separated them from their essential roles as educators who prepare lesson plans, conduct class discussions, assess their pupils’ performance, and other responsibilities in teaching (Horowitz, 2011; Tingley, and Vowles, 2021; Guo, Cheng, Luo, and Zhao 2021).

Meanwhile parent-led education has been practiced globally for many years (Ray, 2011). However, this is relatively new to Filipino families. As schools suspended in-person instruction, teachers and parents felt overwhelmed and stressed about teaching their children at home. Social distancing and stay-at-home edicts disengaged millions of kids from in-person education. They left parents with little time to prepare to support their children’s education at home. Parents assert that this ‘home schooling’ scenario is unfavorable to the students. The literature agrees that homeschooling is a massive shock to parents and the social life and learning of the students. (Lee, Ward, and Chang, 2020;2020; Ancheta, and Ancheta, 2020).

Parents are the children’s first instructors, significantly influencing their personalities. The combination of home and school education shape the student’s actual learning. Parental encouragement has been critical in the success of students. Their role extends beyond the home to include participation in school activities. Parents are the teachers’ partners in education. They are home facilitators offering educational support to children from their parents concerning issues such as homework would help children create an everyday learning routine when children are doing their task, parents’ should stimulate it by praising, vaunting, and rewarding (Lebaste, 2020; Bin Nordin, Iqbal and Bajwa, 2021; Ceka and Murati, 2016; Rizaldi, Nurhayati, Fatimah, and Amni, 2021).

This transition to effective crisis teaching appears easier for some educators than others. Most of it is related to what they were doing in classrooms prior to COVID-19. Of course, much depends on the context of the school community, and even the most successful teachers have encountered difficulties with student engagement, accessibility, well-being, and motivation. However, it appears that teachers and leaders who used student-centered approaches with relational pedagogies built strong communication channels with parents and families and used digital technologies. Growth-oriented assessment practices fared better during the transition. Finally, we believe these educators should lead the system moving forward. (Hollweck, and Doucet, 2020; Berry, Doucet, and Owens, 2020).

Amid the pandemic, passionate professionalism entails educators being anchored in the principles of ethics and sound judgment while doing their best for the students in their care. It needs reflecting on and critically thinking about one’s teaching practice, holding oneself accountable for one’s actions, and seeking out expertise, resources, and research as needed (Hollweck, and Doucet, 2020; González, Fernández, Pino-Yancovic, and Madrid, 2020).

**PROCEDURES**

**The Rationale for Qualitative Approach**

This study utilized the qualitative research design. Accordingly, qualitative research focuses on gathering information through open-ended and conversational communication. Furthermore, it entails collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to comprehend concepts, opinions, or experiences. Qualitative research can be used to gain in-depth insights into a problem or generate new research ideas (Bhandari, 2020; Cristobal and De La Cruz-Cristobal, 2017).

**Phenomenological Research Approach**

While phenomenology study seeks to understand the meaning of people’s lived experiences, it explores what people experienced and focuses on their experience of phenomena. This research approach describes the essence of a phenomenon by examining it from those who have experienced it. The goal of phenomenology is to explain the meaning of experience and how it was experienced (Arcilla-Serapio, 2016; Neubauer, Witkop, Varpio, 2019).

Moreover, utilized in this study was Hermeneutics phenomenology. Hermeneutics is thus the art of hearing. This method elicits participant stories as a source of understanding. It enables researchers to investigate how experiences, traditions, and culture shape ordinary daily practices. The goal is to understand the speaker’s mental process and true meaning, which in this study are the teachers (Oerther, 2020; Pratiwi, Herman and Suryadi, 2020; Pérez Vargas, Nieto Bravo and Santamaría Rodríguez, 2020).

**Samples and Site**

Malapatan Central Elementary School at South Cotabato-Sarangani Road, Malapatan, Sarangani, is the location of the conduct of the study. The participants of this study were the grade six teachers of Malapatan Central Elementary School. The researcher chose five participants for the study. Employing the convenience sampling method, the researcher only selected Grade 6 teachers of the school as his participants.

Based on the Region Memorandum AD No. 31, s. 2020, DepEd SOCCSKSARGEN region and division offices, including all schools, are directed to continue implementing a combination of skeleton workforce and work from home.
arrangements as alternative work arrangements (AWA) for teaching and non-teaching personnel. Therefore, the schools must have fifty percent (50%) of the total number of employees working from home (WFH) or telecommuting for three days and the other two days to report as skeleton workforce in the office. The school heads will alternate such arrangements with 50% of the office/school employees.

In observance of this mandate, the school is implementing an alternative work arrangement that involves separating teachers residing outside Malapatan borders from the teachers living within the municipality. Additionally, Grades 3 to 5 are primarily from General Santos City, and only a few are from Malapatan. Furthermore, the remaining Grade 3 to 5 teachers are residing in Malapatan. These age groups are at risk for severe illness from COVID-19. With the rampaging COVID-19, these mechanisms were deemed vital.

The researcher utilized the convenience sampling method. Hence, the researcher collected the research data from a readily available pool of participants. Furthermore, rapid and low-cost; convenience sampling is appropriate for generating quick ideas, consulting on perspectives, or fostering community engagement. Moreover, the researcher used this sampling to select participants and only chose participants based on their length of service; hence, those who have been teaching for at least five years. The researcher collected a large amount of data for the study. (Pierce, McManus, Jessop, John, Hotopf, Ford and Abel, 2020; Sedgwick, 2013).

Access and Permissions

The researcher gave informed consent to the participants containing the study's objectives, procedures, risks, benefits, compensation of the interview, and the confidentiality of their data. Moreover, the researcher gave time to the participants to read the informed consent and answer any questions and concerns regarding the study. After the interview, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings and returned the transcript to the participants. Furthermore, the researcher gave the participants the transcript to edit and verify their answers. After the participants agreed to their transcript, they signed a verification form of their interview data. In an era of growing public skepticism, accessibility and verification contribute to the credibility of research in general (Pool, 2017; Polit and Beck, 2014).

Data Gathering Strategies

Upon the approval of the research adviser to conduct the study, the researcher wrote a letter to the principal of Malapatan Central Elementary School, asking permission to conduct a research study in the said school. After the principal agreed to the request, the researcher wrote a letter asking permission from the grade level chairman of the school. After the latter agreed to the request, the researcher conducted the study.

The first step in the data gathering was to identify the qualified participants for the study. As mentioned above, five Grade 6 teachers who have been teaching for five years were selected to participate in the study. The researcher has given informed consent to qualified participants. Those who agreed to the terms and conditions of the informed consent were the official participants of the study. Ensuring voluntary informed consent is all researchers’ ethical and legal responsibility (Anderson, Newman and Matthews, 2017).

The researcher then interviewed the participants one at a time. At the start of the interview, the researcher read aloud the informed consent they had signed to confirm their participation. After the participants confirmed their participation, the researcher explained the interview procedure and asked them any questions or concerns about the process. During the interview, strictly observed were the minimum health protocols. The participant and the researcher's distance was at least six feet away, wearing a face mask and face shield, and using alcohol or hand sanitizer were also observed. Furthermore, the researcher gave enough time to the key informants to ask questions and express their concerns (Polit and Beck, 2014).

The researcher read the questions twice or more with clarity to the participants. In addition, the researcher gave the participants’ time to think about their answers. Then the researcher verbally summarized the response of the participants in each question to ensure that there was no misconception regarding their solutions. The researcher only addressed the participants to their given code names or pseudonyms during the whole interview. In this manner, the researcher observed confidentiality. The participants' confidentiality was maintained by not disclosing their names (Arifin, 2018).

The researcher recorded the entire interview on a smartphone. Following the discussion, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings and returned the transcript to the participants. Participants could edit the transcript. After they agreed to the transcript, the participants signed a form confirming the accuracy of their interview data (Pool, 2017).

Data Analysis Approach

The researcher examined the data to regularly identify common themes or topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning. Familiarization, Coding, Generating Themes, Reviewing Themes, Defining and Naming Themes, and Writing Up are the six steps in this approach. The researcher then studied the interview transcript and used thematic analysis to answer the study's main research questions. Accordingly, thematic analysis is a qualitative methodological approach used to describe a group of texts, such as interview transcripts (Caulfield, 2019).

In general, during data analysis in qualitative research, the researcher engaged in a unit of analysis selection, subjective observation of the realities of the phenomenon, becoming an instrument for data analysis, looking for multiple facts behind the data, categorizing and finding themes from categories, and presenting an overall storyline of data through analytical insights (Connelly and Peltzer, 2016).
According to Braun and Clarke (2006), as cited by Maguire and Delahunt (2017), it is the first qualitative method that a qualitative researcher should learn because it teaches core skills useful for conducting many other types of analysis. The thematic analysis seeks to identify themes or essential or interesting patterns in data and then use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue. Finally, an excellent thematic analysis does more than summarize the data; it interprets and makes sense of it (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

RESULTS
This study explored the experiences of grade six Malapatan Central Elementary School teachers in employing self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher used a qualitative framework design in this study. Methods common to phenomenological research guided data collection and analysis. This chapter presents the findings. It consists of the description of the participants in the study and the study of the themes.

Description of the Participants
The participants of the in-depth interviews consisted of five (5) teachers from Malapatan Central Elementary School located in Barangay Poblacion, South Cotabato-Surangani Road. They are female grade six teachers varying in age, subject taught, and length of service.

A code was assigned to each participant to maintain confidentiality.

Participant 1 is a 40-year old teacher who handled ESP, Science, Araling Panlipunan, and MAPEH classes. She has been teaching for 11 years.

Participant 2 is a 27-year-old teacher who handled ESP, Araling Panlipunan, Science, and TLE classes. She has been teaching for five years.

Participant 3 is 33 years old and taught Science, Filipino, Araling Panlipunan, and ESP. She has been in the profession for 11 years.

Participant 4 is a 27-year old teacher who handled ESP, Math, Araling Panlipunan, and TLE classes. She has been teaching for five years.

Participant 5 is 35 years old and taught ESP, Filipino, and MAPEH. She has been serving for nine years.

Analysis of Themes
The researcher discovered findings that evolved from the data collected through the in-depth interview with five (5) grade six teachers of Malapatan Central Elementary School in employing self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview protocol allowed for a rich depiction of the participants' experiences through the systematic collection, organization, and analysis of textual material deduced from talk or conversation. The researcher transcribed the entire interview patiently, then read and reread the transcription thoroughly. Moreover, since collecting and analyzing data take a considerable amount of time, each lengthens the time (Creswell, 2014).

After reading each transcription multiple times, the researcher entered phenomenological reduction by delineating units of meaning. The researcher accomplished it by noting patterns in how participants described their experiences in employing self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), the researcher should familiarize oneself with the data by attentively reading and rereading transcripts to grasp the textual data better. It is what is now called thematic analysis.

Consequently, the researcher generated three main themes from the participants' responses concerning their experiences in utilizing the self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first theme is coping with the difficulties through a passion for teaching. The second theme is optimism in the face of adversities—finally, alienation from job, pupils, and oneself as the impact of employing self-learning modules.

This study explored the experiences of grade six Malapatan Central Elementary School teachers in employing self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do participants describe the essence of their experiences employing a self-learning module in teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?
   1.1. How do the participants view the essence of their experiences employing self-learning modules during COVID-19 learning?
   1.2. How do the participants feel the essence of their experiences employing self-learning modules during COVID-19?
   1.3. How does the essence of their experiences employing self-learning modules affect their teaching?
Research Sub-question Number 1: How do the participants view the essence of their experiences employing self-learning modules during COVID-19 learning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>The participants are coping with the difficulties in the new normal through a passion for teaching.</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Cluster Themes</td>
<td>Unfamiliarity and unpreparedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How do the participants view the essence of their experiences employing self-learning modules during COVID-19 learning?</td>
<td>1. Experience is viewed as not usual (P3)</td>
<td>Coping with challenges in the new normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Never experienced employing self-learning modules before (P2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Employing self-learning modules is not easy (P1)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Need to find ways to teach to the pupils (P3)</td>
<td>Low morale as an educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. They become front liners too because they deliver modules house to house (P1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Effort in reaching far-flung areas where their pupils reside (P1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Assist pupils when having difficulty with subjects through text, group chat, or home visitation (P4)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Feeling like a “printing press” (P2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Not teaching actual lessons (P2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Distributing and retrieving of modules instead of teaching (P5)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Teachers are trained for classroom teaching (P3)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. No face-to-face teaching is done (P5)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13. Doubting whether the pupils learn from the module without the teachers explaining the lessons themselves (P2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. So many considerations on children’s level of understanding (P3)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Reproducing self-learning modules enhance ICT capacities in reproducing module (P1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. By enhancing ICT capabilities, teaching is possible even at a distance (P3)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. Determined to give good education to the pupils despite the pandemic (P1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Believe that pandemic is not a hindrance to quality education (P4)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. Can still teach through communicating virtually and home visitation (P4)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. Monitoring pupils one by one (P4)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. Need to establish connections with parents make it easy to monitor pupils (P3)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22. Physical delivery of modules lead to closer involvement of parents with their child’s education (P4)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23. Does not give pressure to parents on passing modules (P4)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24. The vital stage of her career (P1)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>25. Teaches them lessons in life (P1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26. I never experienced anything like this before (P2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27. Experiences are part of teaching growth (P1)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several emergent themes emerged during the analysis of the qualitative data. They are: Unfamiliarity and unpreparedness, Coping with challenges in the new normal, Low morale as an educator, Lack of confidence in the current education system, Digital literacy, Passion for teaching, Parent-teacher relationship, and Perceived significant impact of the experiences to their career.

Accordingly, the emergent themes led to the creation of the main theme “The participants are coping with the difficulties in the new normal through a passion for teaching”. The teachers find ways to cope with these challenges because deep within their hearts, teaching is their passion. They have to be resourceful and versatile and enhance their digital literacy to perform their duties as educators continuously.

Professional development of teachers is essential to the successful improvement of education. The professional development of teachers is the position of the future. Their experiences and the new challenges will be needed to face and to guide all students to a higher level of learning and development. In addition, professional development is a continuous process in which individuals practice specific occupations. Participating in continuing professional
development has goals: for instance, they are to help teachers change their perceptions or conceptual understanding, as well as their classroom practices, in order to improve student’s learning outcomes. They maximize sustained learning and applicability (Ibrahim and Kavlu, 2020; Martinet, Gauthier, and Raymond, 2001; Badawi, 2009).

Research Sub-question Number 2: How do the participants feel the essence of their experiences employing self-learning modules during COVID-19?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>Optimism in the Face of Adversities</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. How do the participants feel the essence of their experiences employing self-learning modules during COVID-19?</td>
<td>Cluster Themes</td>
<td>Determination and resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Rise to the challenges and prove pandemic is not a hindrance to education (P4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional distress: demotivation, frustration, burnout, confusion, doubt, fear, sadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Wants to prove to those who comment that the government should stop giving them salaries that they are wrong (P3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Take negative comments as a challenge to prove they are capable to teach (P4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Courageous to ignore negative comments (P4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Beliefs learning can still happen despite the pandemic (P3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Fears for her health and her family’s health (P1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Feels that printing and sorting modules are laborious (P3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Feels burdened due to bulky modules that need to be reproduced (P3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Feels disgusted seeing the modules (P5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Bored after delivering (P5)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. It feels like a failure (P4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Affected negatively on the quality of instruction (P3)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. It feels when someone says that their experiences in implementing modules are irrelevant (P4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Excited about employing self-learning modules (P1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Feels excited about the results (P3)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Excited and anxious during delivery and retrieval of modules (P3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Happy when reproducing modules because they will not have to find materials (P1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Happy with parents active participation in getting their pupils’ modules (P2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Still happy because they can still teach despite the pandemic (P1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Feels relieved after producing modules (P3)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Feels accomplished and ready to distribute modules (P3)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Satisfied because they can still fulfill tasks despite the pandemic (P1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Thankful if told that experiences will help them grow (P4)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Thankful for people who appreciate their work (P2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Agree when people say that their experiences in implementing modules will help them grow (P2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Insulted if told that their efforts to deliver instructions to the schoolchildren are irrelevant (P1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Feels insulted when someone questions or comments something about their teaching during the pandemic (P5)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28. Rebuke those who question their experiences during the pandemic (P3)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quite a few emergent themes surfaced during the qualitative data analysis. They are: Determination and resilience, Emotional distress, demotivation, frustration, burnout, confusion, doubt, fear, and sadness, Excitement, Happiness, Satisfaction, Gratitude, Resentment towards negative views on teachers.

Consequently, the subsequent emergent themes led to the conception of the major theme “Optimism in the Face of Adversities”. The participants’ feelings about their self-learning modules experiences are positive and negative. More importantly, these revealed their optimism in the face of adversities. Maintaining a positive outlook in life amidst the current pandemic is essential to move forward.
Being a teacher has traditionally been one of the most stressful professions to undertake. However, they are no strangers to feelings of grief. Thus, teacher well-being contributes significantly to job satisfaction and productivity, benefiting student well-being and academic achievement (Spilt, Koomen, and Thijs, 2011; De Nobile, 2017; Gonzalez, Brown and Slate, 2008).

**Research Sub-question Number 3:** How does the essence of their experiences employing self-learning modules affect their teaching?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>Alienation from job, pupils and oneself</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Cluster Themes</td>
<td>Estrangement from profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How does the essence of their experiences employing self-learning modules affect their teaching?</td>
<td>1. Does not understand the tasks in teaching pupils (P1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Not being able to study the lessons to be taught because there is no face to face classes (P2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Overlooks which specific competency belongs to a particular quarter (P3)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. She cannot give her 100 percent effort in teaching because there is no face to face classes (P5)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Classroom management is affected because the teacher only gives and retrieves modules (P3)</td>
<td>Difficulty in assessing pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Can only measure performance based on the modules (P3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Cannot conduct online-based classes to assess pupils further (P3)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Does not know if pupils gave their best in answering the module (P1)</td>
<td>Estrangement from pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Does not know who the pupils are, including their attitudes (P2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Does not know the pupils’ way of understanding the lesson (P4)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Cannot observe pupils’ behavior (P4)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Seeing parents most of the time instead of pupils (P4)</td>
<td>Parent-led education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Continuously monitor the parents on pupils’ performance (P3)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Undergo virtual training (P1)</td>
<td>Online Professional Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. There are seminars but only done virtually, listening but not participating (P2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Prefers to be in a venue meeting the speaker (P2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. Forgets parts of the lessons (P2)</td>
<td>Decline in knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Forgets experiences in classroom management (P4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. Forgets which topics belong to a specific quarter (P3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. Knowledge is somewhat declining (P5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. An expert in some subjects matter (P3)</td>
<td>Lack of expertise on the subject matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22. Not confident enough to teach other subjects (P5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23. Not used to teaching lessons which are not her subjects (P2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24. Feels she might confuse learners (P5)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25. Experiences do not affect commitment to teaching because she loves her profession (P5)</td>
<td>Unwavering commitment as an educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26. Commitment to the profession is still strong (P3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>27. Exerted great efforts to be an effective teacher still (P3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>28. Needs to have adjustments (P4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29. It needs to review again (P2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of emergent themes appeared during the qualitative data analysis. They are: Estrangement from profession, Difficulty in assessing pupils, Estrangement from pupils, Parent-led education, Online Professional Advancement, Decline in knowledge, Lack of expertise on the subject matter, Unwavering commitment as an educator.

Based on the emergent themes identified, a major theme was formulated and identified as “Alienation from job, pupils and oneself”. In the context of the teachers’ experiences in self-learning modules, the sudden changes in their environment, particularly the prohibition of face-to-face classes and the centralized production of modules that altered their
responsibilities as educators, led to their alienation from their profession, their pupils, and themselves.

Incidentally, the COVID-19 Pandemic has separated them from their essential roles as educators who prepare lesson plans, conduct class discussions, assess their pupils' performance, and other responsibilities in teaching (Horowitz, 2011; Tingley, and Vowles, 2021; Guo, Cheng, Luo, and Zhao 2021). Moreover, changes in working conditions during a pandemic have negative consequences for employees in alienation from work. (Horowitz, 2011; Guo, Cheng, Luo, and Zhao 2021; Denis, Côté, Fleury, Currie and Spyridonidis, 2021).

**DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the findings, comparison with the existing studies, limitations of the research, implication for further investigation, and the overall significance of the qualitative research on the teachers' experiences employing self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic Malapatan Central Elementary School, Division of Sarangani.

The study pursued to describe the essence of the experiences of the teachers employing self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly their views, feelings, and the impacts of these experiences on their teaching. Thus, the study extracted the necessary information needed from the participants during the in-depth interview. The study results may equip the curriculum partners with principles and guidelines in reinforcing the instruction in the Division of Sarangani. The DepEd authorities in the district and division levels will use this as a stepping-stone in conducting different training and workshops to recalibrate teaching strategies in the new normal. It will also improve the teaching performance and uplift the teachers' morale in this pivotal stage of their professions.

**Major Findings**

This qualitative research described the teachers' lived experiences employing self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were three main themes: Coping with the Difficulties in the New Normal through Passion for Teaching, Optimism in the Face of Adversities, and Alienation from Job, Pupils, and Oneself. They were experiencing something new for the first time in their lives. The teachers faced a massive, sudden change. Accordingly, it affected their personal lives and the course of their careers. The COVID-19 pandemic has separated them from their essential roles as educators. Preparing lesson plans, facilitating class discussions, assessing their pupils' performance, and other responsibilities that encompass the teaching profession are the things missing in their routine as teachers.

During the pandemic, the researcher discovered that teachers in distance learning education were unfamiliar and unprepared. Thus, these changes have caused low morale as educators and doubts about the current situation of the educational system. They experienced emotional distress characterized by demotivation, frustration, burnout, confusion, doubt, fear, and sadness. Moreover, the tremendous shift in their responsibilities as educators led to their alienation from their profession, pupils, and themselves.

Nevertheless, the teachers remained optimistic. They find ways to cope with these challenges because deep within their hearts lies their passion for teaching. Regardless of the danger of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers continue to traverse the new standard education, which demonstrates their resilience. Their resilience enabled them to be happy, excited, and grateful for the experiences that allowed them to grow. Furthermore, they rejected that their experiences and role as teachers in the new normal are irrelevant. They were determined to prove that those who question them are wrong and stay relevant in the learners' journey no matter what. They take several measures such as bringing out their resourcefulness and versatility, enhancing their ICT skills and relationship with the parents, adapting to the situation, and continuously performing their duties as educators.

**Comparison of Findings with Existing Studies**

More than a year has passed after the national government ordered the suspension of face-to-face classes due to the highly infectious COVID-19. However, until today, the virus is still ravaging the country, and among those drastically affected is the education sector. Hence, educational leaders adopted the different learning modalities through primary education's Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP). Moreover, the Department of Education (DepEd) is the program implementer (DepEd, 2020).

This study revealed that coping with the teachers' difficulties in the new normal is through passion for teaching. Accordingly, they find ways to cope with the different challenges in the new normal because deep within their hearts, teaching is their passion. In the face of adversities, they have to bring out their resourcefulness and versatility and enhance their digital literacy to perform their duties as educators' continuously. Moreover, their experiences during this pandemic have strengthened the parent-teacher relationship and significantly impacted their lives and careers.

These findings corroborate the findings of Robosa, Paras, Perante, Alvez, and Tus's study (2021) on the Experiences and Challenges Faced of the Public School Teachers Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Phenomenological Study in the Philippines. They stated that teaching is exhausting, especially in hard-to-miss or forget things. Even when grades are done, attending staff meetings, and preparing students for the next exam were still yet to be done. However, Robosa, Paras, Perante, Alvez, and Tus (2021) added that the occupations could be stretched and energized by focusing on passion. For instance, seeing an older student helping a younger peer is adorable to observe. It indicates that the things imparted to learners become more meaningful upon witnessing the results. Meaning it is just about doing the things that the people personally love.
Similarly, the study of Leer (2021) talked about passion for learning to teach during the pandemic. In her dealings with students, she found out that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of soft skills and intensified the need for adaptation. Still, teachers continually adapt to changing circumstances regularly. Regardless of teaching experience, those who embody fundamental principles like care for students, flexibility, and passion for the profession seem to navigate shifting teaching contexts successfully.

The second theme that came out from the analysis of the textual data was about optimism in the face of adversities. Despite the present pandemic, the teachers demonstrate positivism by retaining an optimistic attitude on life. They may also endure emotional distress characterized by demotivation, frustration, fatigue, confusion, doubt, fear, and despair. However, they remain determined and resilient, allowing them to continue to give their services to the learners with joy, excitement, and a sense of accomplishment. That is why they are grateful when others see their experiences as opportunities to learn and grow and resentful of those who see their experiences as irrelevant.

Neborsky, Boguslavsky, Ladyzhets, Yarmak, and Cherdymova's discussions, evaluating their students' performance, and other responsibilities as educators, which led to alienation from their profession, their students, and themselves. The COVID-19 pandemic has distanced them from their actual tasks as educators. These include preparing lesson plans, leading class discussions, evaluating their students' performance, and other duties associated with teaching.

These findings are consistent with Kozhina, Vinokurov, Neborsky, Boguslavsky, Ladyzhets, Yarmak, and Cherdymova's study (2020). Their correlational study revealed that work alienation increased during the pandemic. The second part showed that workplace distancing; temporary work flexibility, ICTs, and job insecurity are significant predictors of work alienation among university professors.

Generally, alienation from work is a complex negative mental state associated with the destruction of interpersonal communications, expressed in the perception by employees of powerlessness and loss of meaning concerning their activity, working environment, and social environment; loss of self-identification in the role of an organizational employee; and violation and errors of interaction and communication (Vinokurov, 2019).

**Limitations**

This study focused mainly on the essence of the experiences of public school teachers in employing self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the research participants were only limited to five (5) Malapatan Central Elementary School teachers. The researcher chose participants based on their service length, specifically participants who have been teaching for five years or more. According to Creswell (2014), only a few individuals in qualitative research participate because it is easy to attain saturation. When adding more participants to the study, saturation does not result in additional perspectives or information. For phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommended 5 to 25. Moreover, since collecting and analyzing data take a considerable amount of time, each lengthens the time (Creswell, 2014).

Therefore, this study cannot give the general experience of public school teachers in employing self-learning modules. The reason is that this study was only limited to the responses gathered from the five teachers of Malapatan Central Elementary School. Additionally, due to the nature of qualitative research, the data obtained may be subject to different interpretations by different readers. Moreover, the techniques of the data collector and their unique observations can alter the information in subtle ways. Finally, because of the interpretative nature of the qualitative research, the investigators may introduce their biases into the analysis of the findings.

**Implications for Future Research**

The research results could not generalize the public school teachers employing self-learning modules because it only involved a few Malapatan Central Elementary School teachers. Hence, a study of the same kind may be conducted in other schools, districts, and divisions to validate the results and collect additional information about teachers' experiences in the phenomenon.

In addition, future research may be undertaken with the same participants to determine whether or not their experiences in employing self-learning modules during the COVID-19 pandemic have changed over time since the possibility of face-to-face classes in the next school year is still uncertain. Further research may also be undertaken from the perspective of the pupils and the parents to extract and divert information in creating a broader view about the phenomenon. Moreover, to help the authorities develop better strategies to ensure the effectiveness of the new educational system, particularly the self-learning modules as an alternative to traditional modalities of learning.

**Overall Significance of the Study**

This phenomenological qualitative research may be significant to the following:

The Pupils: The study results will help the pupils understand the difficulties faced by their teachers, especially in
employing self-learning modules. In this regard, they will learn to value their teachers’ efforts, become more diligent in answering their modules, and cooperate with the teachers, especially on communication. They will also benefit from the new standard educational system’s improvement once relevant agencies consider this study’s results.

The Teachers: The results of this study will help them understand their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and learn to appreciate their struggles as part of their growth. Additionally, the results will help them develop better strategies to strengthen their relationship with the learners. This study will also promote a sense of oneness in the teaching community. Furthermore, this scholarly work will give the teachers an idea that the difficulties they experience are not merely isolated but resonate across the teaching profession.

The Department of Education (DepEd) authorities: The findings of this study may be beneficial in creating institutional plans to understand better the status of teachers and educational organizations, as well as schools’ readiness to teach and learn via distance learning approaches; thus, retaining and continuing educational objective during the present or prospective pandemic, as well as being prepared for any natural disasters. The results can also serve as a basis for continuous faculty training and development and the improvement of the educational system, in general.

Parents: The results of this study will also help parents understand the gravity of their role in implementing the self-learning modules. These will provide them a better insight into the current changes in the educational system as well as the efforts of the teachers in employing self-learning modules. The results will also remove the prejudices towards the role and relevance of teachers in the new standard educational system and strengthen their relationship with the teaching force.

REFERENCES


113. R. A. 7836. An act to strengthen the regulation and supervision of the practice of teaching in the Philippines and prescribing a licensure examination for teachers and for other purposes.


