

# Elementary Classroom: Challenges of Teachers in Conducting Face-to-Face Classes

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**Abstract.** This phenomenological study investigated elementary school teachers' experiences in the face-to-face classroom environment, focusing on their coping mechanisms and challenges. Ten teachers from the Panabo Central District, Schools Division of Panabo City, particularly in Rizal Elementary School, participated, offering insights into integrating digital and non-digital technology media. By exploring teachers' perspectives and reflections, this research aimed to deepen understanding of the post-pandemic classroom dynamics and its impact on educators and students. Findings highlighted the emergence of adaption hybrid learning environments and the importance of developing learner-centered approaches and less flexibility of instruction. Despite positive experiences, challenges, including technical knowledge and resource competence, impacted teacher self-efficacy. Insights from teachers' experiences underscored the necessity of upskilling and innovativeness of teachers. Proper integration and education on technological tools were essential for teachers to navigate the virtual classroom effectively, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience for students. This study contributed valuable insights into adapting pedagogical practices to meet the demands of contemporary educational landscapes.

## KEY WORDS

1. New Classroom Environment 2. post-pandemic 3. face-to-face

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## 1. Introduction

The statement shared by Elizabeth Ross encapsulates the learning environment's profound influence on the education process of the learners. It suggests that when the atmosphere is conducive to teaching and learning, the act of learning is bound to happen. This idea implies that creating a learning environment that promotes curiosity, collaboration, and engagement is necessary for providing effective and quality education. The unique set of experiences that teachers are facing in the contemporary landscape of education is what fuelled my desire to conduct

this study. Although we gradually reopened the school walls to the learners a few years back, it is undeniable that some of the teachers are still grappling with maneuvering the complexities of the modern education system, particularly now in its tech-centric form. With a myriad of challenges spanning from managing classrooms and educating students to completing administrative duties and personal development, how do teachers overcome all of these hurdles? It is inquiries like these that pique my curiosity and drive my desire to learn more about the

complexities of the teacher's life in the face-to-face classroom environment. Several studies have been conducted to research the teaching and learning environment after the reopening of classes. Many people believe such as Bryant et al. (2020) that reopening our schools is essential to the recovery strategy because it would provide necessary social support, especially for more vulnerable students. Despite the challenges that school leaders might confront such as re-enrollment and remedial academic support, Bryant and colleagues stated that a world where the learners are learning, and parents are working in a free-virus world is worth fighting for. In North Spain, Idoiaga Mondragon et al. (2021) investigated teachers' quality of life at the beginning of the 2020–2021 school year amid the pandemic. Teachers faced particular difficulties in this setting, one of which was adjusting to the new learning environment and questioning their safety and health precautions. Research indicates that it is crucial to look after the health and well-being of educators, particularly those who are older and have long-term sickness, carers, people facing job instability, and preschool teachers. Aside from the personal concerns of the educators regarding the face-to-face classroom environment, many experts argue that the pandemic has widened the pre-existing learning disparity among children from different socioeconomic statuses across all countries, particularly in third-world countries. Patrinos et al. (2020) examined 36 chosen studies assessing learning decline in diverse nations and they discovered that learning setbacks represented an average of 0.17 standard deviations, or roughly 1.5 years' worth of lost learning. In a similar study conducted in the Philippines by Jackaria (2022), he examined teachers' experiences with regard to the preparations and difficulties encountered when classes reopened following the pandemic. Teachers faced challenges in spite of extensive preparations that included putting new teaching methodologies into practice, develop-

ing instructional materials, improving school facilities physically, implementing health protocols, and being psychologically ready. They voiced concerns about the high percentage of pupils who have reading difficulties and are not socially or mentally prepared. According to the study, the school reopening plan should include both psychosocial first aid and a thorough reading intervention. To add to this phenomenon, Ii Abuyog, Javier, and MacArthur Leyte, research was conducted by Ondoras and Alvero (2022) to investigate the difficulties public elementary and secondary school teachers faced in addressing learning gaps among students following the pandemic. Using a qualitative methodology and 25 teachers, the study identified obstacles like student disengagement, overlapping assignments, and inadequate parental or guardian support. These difficulties jeopardize students' academic progress, highlighting the critical need for improved assistance for struggling students and increased cooperation between educators, parents, and other stakeholders. The report of Bautista (2020) provided a snapshot of the challenges faced by teachers and schools in the Philippines during the transition to full in-person classes. Some of the issues highlighted in the report included resource shortages, makeshift solutions to accommodate students, and uncertainty surrounding government guidelines. This report highlights the need for thorough support and deliberate planning to navigate teachers' challenges effectively. In the district of Panabo Central, Davao del Norte, elementary school teachers are also facing challenges in navigating the face-to-face classroom environment post-pandemic. Although the reopening of face-to-face classes happened a few years back, some educators are still dealing with problems left by the pandemic. How do they manage these challenges? It is in this context that this study was conceptualized. This study will investigate the subjective experiences of elementary school teachers of the Panabo Central district particu-

larly in Rizal Elementary School. The aim of this study is to unearth the buried sentiments of teachers as they go back to normalcy. While existing studies outlined in this paper shed light on numerous challenges and obstacles faced by educators, there remains a significant gap in understanding both the positive and negative experiences of teachers within the face-to-face classroom environment. This study sought to bridge this divide by delving into the obscured sentiments and commendations of teachers operating within the modernized educational system. Are they content with the current setup, or do they advocate for further changes in the guidelines? By pursuing answers to these inquiries, educators, school administrators, students, parents, and other stakeholders will gain deeper insights into the complexities, advantages, and drawbacks of contemporary education.

*1.1. Purpose of the Study*—This phenomenological study investigated the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in Panabo Central District regarding the face-to-face classroom environment, particularly in Rizal Elementary School. It determined how they cope with the existing problems. By delving into teachers’ perspectives and reflections, this study sought to learn a lot about the perspectives, difficulties, and teaching methods that teachers use in order to understand better the dynamics of the face-to-face classroom environment post-pandemic and how it affected both teachers’ and students’ educational journeys. This study presented a thorough knowledge of the relationship between teacher experiences and the general effectiveness of teaching and learning in primary schools. The primary focus of the data collection is on the actual experiences of elementary school teachers in relation to the classroom environment in face-to-face classes. The results of this phenomenological study helped us comprehend teachers’ real-life struggles and experiences in the new classroom environment brought by face-to-face classes after the pandemic. The insights collected from this study have the potential to influence educational management strategies, professional development programs, and regulations meant to foster empowered and nurturing learning environments in classrooms.

*1.2. Research Questions*—This study explored the real-life experiences of elementary school teachers about the new classroom environment in face-to-face classes. The research was executed to address the following inquiries:

- (1) What are the experiences of elementary school teachers in the face-to-face classroom environment?
- (2) How do elementary school teachers cope with problems in their face-to-face classroom environment?
- (3) What educational management insights can be drawn from the study’s findings focused on the face-to-face classroom environment?

*1.3. Definition of Terms*—For a more comprehensive understanding, the following terms were described operationally. Teaching-Learning Experience. It was defined as ideally challenging, interesting, rich, engaging, meaningful, and appropriate to learner needs (UNESCO, 2021). Classroom Environment. An important, powerful, and highly effective instrument for socialization, serving as a space where learners from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds converge for the purpose of learning (Adesua, 2014).

*1.4. Significant of the Study*—

Foremost, considering the cited problem situation in the previous parts and the research questions, the researcher found it timely to propose this study. This brought the necessity for the researcher to inquire about the attributes of a new classroom environment, taking on the elementary set-up. The study also sought to find its effect on the teaching-learning experiences of students. The researcher hoped that this study would benefit identified sectors of the academe, including educational leaders, school heads, teachers, other stakeholders, and future researchers. Educational leaders. Educational leaders can benefit from this study's findings because they can provide them with insights regarding the attributes of the new classroom environment in face-to-face classes, which is the

new normal setting. The school heads. The findings of this study might help the school heads or principals be aware of and informed about the experiences of elementary school teachers in their classroom environment and how they can be improved. The teachers. Teachers can benefit from this study by looking into the findings, learning from the experiences of the participants, and noting the characteristics of a new classroom environment in the face-to-face classes. Other stakeholders. They may provide better support to enhance the teaching-learning by providing support in improving the learning environment. Future researchers. This would be helpful as an additional contribution to their references for future research in the field of new classroom environments in new normal settings.

*1.5. Theoretical Lens*—The study's theoretical underpinning was anchored on John Watson's Theory of Behaviorism (1913). The theory posits that the environment shapes behavior. Watson believes that behavior results from environmental factors that directly influence an individual's learning, behavior, and experience. In short, human beings are shaped entirely by their environment, and complex human behaviors are effects of environmental factors. To add, according to Western Governors University (2019), behaviorism or behavioral learning theory is a popular concept that focuses on how students learn. Behaviorism focuses on the idea that all behaviors are learned through interaction with the environment. This learning theory states that behaviors are learned from the environment and says that innate or inherited factors have very little influence on behavior. Therefore, it is key for educators because it impacts how students react and behave in the classroom and suggests that teachers can directly influence how their students behave. It also helps teachers understand that a student's home environment and lifestyle can impact their behav-

ior, helping them see it objectively and work to assist with improvement. In the context of the study, the inquiry in the field of conducive attributes of the new classroom environment and how it can affect the teaching-learning experience is grasped by the Theory of Behaviorism. Education is believed to be achieved by modifying or changing students' behavior through the arrangements of conditions of learning, which pertain to a classroom environment. The study was further reinforced by Dent-Read and Zukow-Goldring's Practice Theory (1997). The theory recognizes that the learner and the learning environment are active. It is juxtaposed with constructivist theory. The proponents posit that in the constructivist setting, students learn from their own discoveries, whereas with practice theory, learners are transformed and shaped by their transactions alongside others and their physical settings. Corroborating the above assertion, in the context of the present study conducted, the Practice Theory aims to understand the new learning environment and the student's interactions and how they affect one another. The classrooms' physical conditions contribute

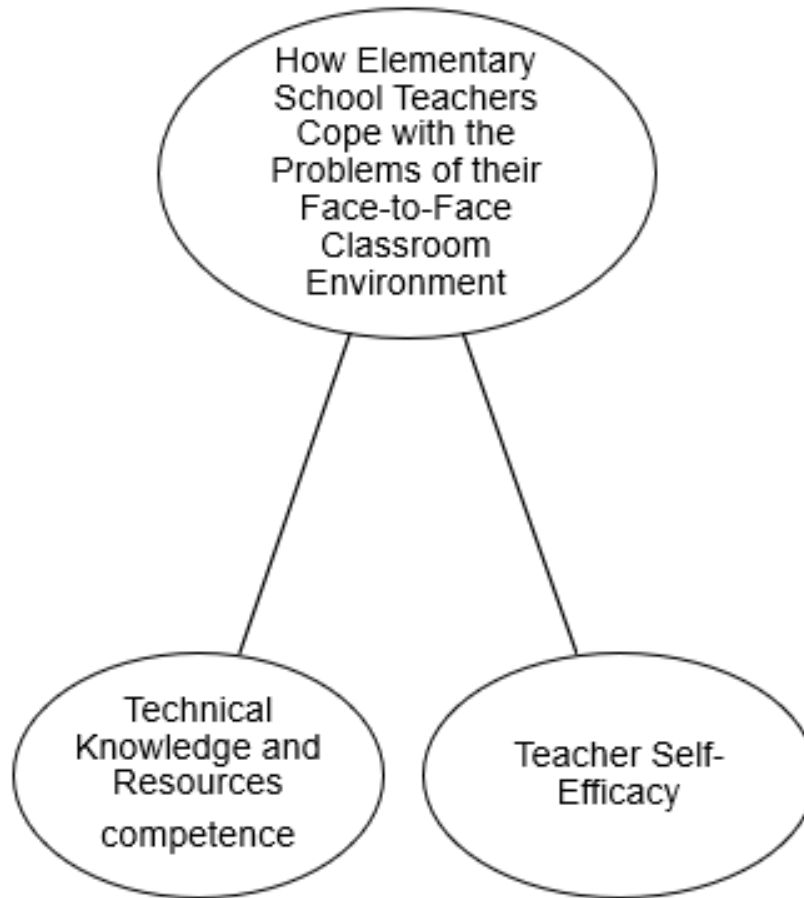


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

to and help in shaping the students and the learning process. Hence, the aforementioned theory was utilized to better understand the classroom environment's effect on students' learning.

## 2. Methodology

This chapter effectively addresses the specific objectives of the study by outlining the systematic procedures and methodologies used in phenomenological research. It also explains the selected research design and the roles I played as the researcher throughout the study's implementation. Moreover, it offers thorough insights into the research subjects, clarifying their procedures and selection standards. The chapter concludes by exploring the techniques used for data collection, analysis, and strategies used to uphold ethical standards during the research.

*2.1. Philosophical Assumptions*—A Four fundamental assumptions—ontological, study's philosophical and qualitative presumptions are vital in steering the investigation. epistemological, axiological, and methodological—form the bedrock for comprehending

qualitative research. These assumptions establish the groundwork for the research design and inform the researcher's approach to the study. A paradigm is a broad framework or perspective that guides and shapes how researchers approach their studies, formulate research questions, gather data, analyze findings, and interpret results. It encompasses a set of beliefs, assumptions, methodologies, and theoretical foundations that influence how researchers conceptualize and conduct their research (Zukauskas et al., 2018). In this research, the paradigm guided the choice of methodology, methods, and techniques, shaping the overall research process and ensuring coherence in the study.

**Ontology.** This study section focuses on the relationship between the problem and reality. Creswell (2013) asserts that the research participants' perceptions of reality were varied and subjective. This study recognized the complexity and diversity of the realities elementary teachers face in the face-to-face classroom environment. Teachers' narratives add to a diverse yet collective understanding of their experiences. It was my sole responsibility to use theme analysis to capture these various realities and provide a thorough picture of the experiences, the problems, and the insights learned in the face-to-face classroom environment.

**Epistemology.** Epistemology deals with the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the known. According to Guba and Lincoln, as referenced by Creswell (2013), the researcher made an effort to reduce the gap between them and the participants based on the epistemological premise. By engaging directly with the participants, I became an "insider," facilitating a more authentic and nuanced collection of data. This approach supported the gathering of firsthand experiences, coping strategies, and insights, which are critical in exploring the subjective realities of the participants.

**Axiology.** It concerns the influence and

importance of my values as a researcher in this study. According to Creswell (2013), acknowledging and openly discussing the researcher's values that shape the study is crucial. The values which influence how data are interpreted and presented are explicitly acknowledged in the research process. As a researcher, I handled each participant's narrative with care and integrity, and I always have the utmost respect for the information they provide. This commitment guaranteed that the experiences of the teachers are communicated truthfully, mirroring both their individual and research values.

**Methodology.** According to Crotty (2020), this is "the strategy, plan of action, process, or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of the methods to the desired outcomes." Its objectives are to explain, assess, and defend procedures (Wellington, 2015). This study explored the real-life experiences of elementary teachers in the face-to-face learning environment and how they coped with the challenges that come with using a qualitative methodology. To support the ontological and epistemological tenets, specific techniques like focus groups and interviews were employed, enabling a thorough and sympathetic examination of participants' stories. These techniques were chosen because they can successfully convey the complexity and depth of the participants' experiences.

**Rhetoric.** In research, rhetoric is the skillful and convincing use of language, communication strategies, and presentation tactics to effectively communicate concepts, claims, and conclusions to sway the audience's opinion and comprehension of the study (Beqiri, 2018). I utilized an engaging and respectful narrative style that honors the participants' voices while effectively communicating the significance of the findings. This method not only made the research easier to read but also guaranteed that the interpretations were strong and based on the participants' experiences.

2.2. *Qualitative Assumptions*—Using a phenomenological research methodology, my goal was to explore the lived varied experiences of elementary teachers regarding the face-to-face classroom setup. My objective was to gather information about their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies about the phenomenon I am studying. Utilizing phenomenology as my guiding qualitative framework, I sought to uncover the essence and significance of the roles played by these individuals, emphasizing their unique viewpoints and the intricate details of their experiences. As the study's qualitative researcher, I supported a level of investigation beyond cursory observations. My research aimed to investigate the experiences, challenges,

and coping mechanisms of participants in relation to the phenomenon. I emphasized the significance of understanding the complexities of the human experience in light of the various perspectives that are shaped by unique contexts, backgrounds, and personal histories (Neubauer et al., 2019). To capture the profound and complex nature of the new educational setup my study placed a strong emphasis on in-depth interviews, reflective dialogues, and the analysis of participants' narratives. I hope to contribute a thorough and contextually rich understanding of the positive and negative experiences, different challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights related to the face-to-face classroom nature, all while upholding phenomenological principles.

2.3. *Design and Procedure*—Determining the precise approach used in a study is crucial in order to customize the best research design, data collection strategy, and data analysis approach to the study's objectives. I used a qualitative research design in this investigation. Hammerley (2013) states that verbal rather than statistical analysis studies are appropriate for qualitative research. Since I am studying the real-life experiences, coping strategies of elementary school teachers, and insights regarding the face-to-face classroom setup, the qualitative design is the most appropriate. This means that I describe and elaborate on this phenomenon rather than establishing or refuting theories. There are, however, specialized methods used in qualitative research, including grounded theory, narrative, case studies, phenomenology, and ethnography. Using a qualitative phenomenological research design, I explored the lived experiences of the participants in this particular setting. I

selected this approach because, according to Asper's (2009) work, the scientific side of phenomenological research focuses on communicating the viewpoints of the subjects and the importance of their experiences, then applying scientific concepts to analyze these perspectives. Furthermore, according to Creswell (2018), a phenomenological study is a method of inquiry that describes the complex and collective experiences of the participants concerning a particular phenomenon. A key idea in phenomenology is to reduce one's interpretations of a specific phenomenon to a description that can be applied to all situations. Therefore, my goal was to identify a phenomenon that revolves around the participants' experiences in the face-to-face classroom setup after years of doing distance learning. I then collect information from people who have direct experience with this phenomenon in order to create detailed and accurate descriptions.

2.4. *Research Participants*—Qualitative analyses typically require a smaller sample size than quantitative analyses. Qualitative sample

sizes should be large enough to obtain feedback for most or all perceptions. Obtaining most or all the perceptions leads to the attainment

of saturation. Saturation occurs when adding more participants to the study does not result in additional perspectives or information. Glaser and Strauss (2017) recommend the concept of saturation for achieving an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies. For phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommends 5 to twenty-five 25, and Morse (1994) suggests at least 6. There were no specific rules when determining the appropriate sample size in qualitative research. Qualitative sample size may best be determined by the time allotted, resources available, and study objectives (Patton, 2002). The participants in this study consisted of 10 elementary school teachers from Rizal Elemen-

tary School. 5 participants for the In-Depth Interview and another 5 participants for the Focus Group Discussion. These participants were selected based on specific criteria: they had to be currently teaching as an elementary school teacher, currently teaching at Rizal Elementary School in Panabo City, and have been teaching for more than 3 years. I utilized the purposive sampling design so that the participants were chosen based on the criteria or purpose of the study (Creswell, 2013). It was also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling. The selection of the participants was purposefully done to ensure that the findings would be authentic (Marshall, 1996).

2.5. *Ethical Considerations*—Ethical considerations are crucial because they relate to the moral principles and guidelines that govern my conduct as a researcher. These principles ensure that I carry out my investigations responsibly, treating participants with respect and striving to generate reliable and precise information. To protect the participants, maintain scientific integrity, and foster trust within the research community, I adhered to established ethical standards in my research practices (Resnik, 2020). Social value. This concerns the potential benefits and favorable outcomes that research can bring to society, like addressing problems or improving people's quality of life. I evaluated the societal value of my study by acknowledging its potential impact and importance for the larger community. This ensured that resources are directed toward research that has the potential to create significant advantages for society. Informed Consent. This involves obtaining a participant's voluntary agreement to participate in a research study after they have been provided with sufficient information about the study's purpose, methods, potential drawbacks, and benefits. In this research involving teachers, it was my responsibility to ensure that

the participants fully understood the study and their rights. This explanation allowed them to make an informed decision about participation, thereby preserving the participants' autonomy and dignity. Vulnerability. The vulnerability of research participants pertains to their increased risk of experiencing harm, exploitation, or coercion due to factors such as age, cognitive ability, or socioeconomic status. As a researcher, it is crucial for me to acknowledge and consider the potential vulnerability of these participants and take appropriate measures to protect them. This involves providing additional safeguards and support, such as obtaining informed consent from them, stating their willingness to engage in the study, ensuring confidentiality, and carefully explaining their rights and the study's procedures in a way they can understand. Additionally, I modified research methods to minimize potential adverse effects, ensuring that the well-being of the participants is prioritized throughout the study. Risks, benefits, and safety. In research, it is essential to carefully evaluate the potential risks and benefits associated with participation in a study, as well as to implement measures that safeguard the well-being of participants. These elements



involved assessing the potential disadvantages and advantages of participating in a study, along with establishing strategies to ensure the welfare of participants. In this investigation, as the researcher, I meticulously assessed and balanced these factors, ensuring that the potential benefits outweigh the risks. I put adequate precautions in place to minimize harm while optimizing the safety of participants, particularly considering the vulnerabilities of student participants. This comprehensive approach is crucial to maintaining ethical standards and protecting the participants throughout the research process.

**Privacy and confidentiality.** Privacy and confidentiality in research are about safeguarding participants' personal information and ensuring their identity remains confidential unless they explicitly consent to disclosure. In the context of this study, I am responsible for implementing appropriate protocols to secure participants' data and maintain confidentiality. This includes anonymizing data, securely storing information, and limiting access to authorized personnel only. These measures were crucial to protect the privacy of student participants and uphold the integrity of the research process.

**Justice.** This concept relates to the equitable allocation of the advantages and disadvantages resulting from research across various segments of society. In this study, I ensured that my research was inclusive, avoiding the exploitation or exclusion of vulnerable groups. Additionally, I strived to make the research's benefits accessible to all who could benefit from them. This approach promoted fairness and equity throughout the research process, ensuring that no group bears an undue burden or is left out of the potential gains from the findings.

**Transparency.** Transparency in research encompasses maintaining integrity at every phase of the study, from its conception and execution to the reporting of results. In this study, I offered clear and truthful information regarding my research methodologies and outcomes. Furthermore, I am receptive to examination and feedback. Transparency acts as a catalyst for trust, credibility, and accountability, not only within the research community but also among the general public. This commitment to openness ensured that the process and results of my research were accessible and understandable to all stakeholders involved.

**The qualification of a researcher.** The qualification of a researcher relates to one's academic background, professional experience, and proficiency in a particular area of study, ensuring that one possesses the requisite abilities and knowledge to conduct the research competently. In this investigation, I held suitable qualifications that showcased my capability to conduct research, analyze data, and interpret the results. My expertise and training provided the foundation necessary to approach this study with a rigorous scientific method and critical analytical skills, ensuring the integrity and validity of the findings.

**The adequacy of facilities.** This addresses the presence and suitability of the essential resources, tools, and infrastructure required to execute a study efficiently and securely. In this research, I guaranteed access to appropriate facilities for conducting the investigation. This access facilitated the creation of credible and consistent findings and mitigated potential risks to study participants. Having the right facilities ensures that the data collection and analysis processes are conducted under conditions that uphold the highest standards of research integrity and safety.

**Community involvement.** This encompassed the dynamic involvement and active engagement of community members, stakeholders, or the intended study population throughout the research journey, from initial planning to sharing research outcomes. In this study, I engaged the community to guarantee the study's relevance, acceptability, and potential impact. Additionally, this involvement fostered trust and cooperation between me and the community. Engaging with the community not only helped to tailor the research to be more effective and

meaningful but also enhanced the overall quality and applicability of the results. Plagiarism and fabrication. Researchers should strictly follow principles of academic honesty and integrity. This entails giving proper credit to the work of others, presenting original contributions, and verifying the accuracy and authenticity of data. In this study, I employed tools like plagiarism

detectors and maintained thorough documentation of my research procedures to ensure that my work is devoid of plagiarism and that all data and discoveries are authentic and reliable. By upholding these principles, I enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the research community.

*2.6. Role of the Researcher*—As an unbiased research facilitator and promoter, I am responsible for ensuring that the research process is conducted fairly, objectively, and without personal bias, prejudice, or influence from outside sources. I created an environment that encourages the open and honest exploration of ideas and promotes fairness in data collection and analysis. This commitment to impartiality helped uphold the integrity of the research process and ensured that the findings were reliable, and representative of the true phenomena being studied. As an expert in qualitative methods, I am familiar with various qualitative research techniques, such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. I possess the skills and knowledge necessary to design, conduct, and analyze qualitative studies, ensuring that the research question is satisfactorily addressed and that the results are legitimate and dependable. My expertise in these methods allows me to deeply explore complex social phenomena and capture the nuanced experiences of participants, contributing to the validity and reliability of the research findings. As a data collector and keeper, I gathered information from various sources such as interviews or observations, and I ensured accurate and secure storage of this information. I followed ethical guidelines, safeguarded participants' privacy, and ensured that data was structured and available for later ex-

amination and understanding. This careful management of data helped maintain the integrity of the research process and supported the production of credible, reliable findings that can be reviewed and utilized by others in the academic community. As a data analyst, I analyzed the gathered data to discover trends, patterns, and valuable perspectives in accordance with the research query. I utilized meticulous qualitative data analysis methods like coding and thematic analysis to extract significant findings and enrich the knowledge base within my discipline. This approach allowed me to deeply understand the data, providing insights that are not only relevant but also contribute significantly to the field, enhancing scholarly discussions and practical applications related to the study topic. Finally, as an organizer and presenter of data, I was tasked with synthesizing and communicating the research findings concisely and coherently. This entails skilfully conveying the study's objectives, approaches, outcomes, and ramifications through written documents, presentations, or alternative means of transmitting information. I ensured that the research results are easily accessible and comprehensible to the designated audience. This approach helped maximize the impact of the findings, ensuring they were not only shared but also understood and utilized by others in ways that can further knowledge and influence practice in the field.

### *2.7. Data Collection*—

In the gathering of data, this study employed a systematic procedure. Several steps were taken in adherence to the proper data collection procedure. This was done in order to ensure the accuracy and objectivity of the data collection. The following is the step-by-step process of gathering the data needed. Securing endorsement from the Dean of Graduate School, the Schools Division Superintendent, and the School Principal. To initiate the data collection process, I secured endorsements from key stakeholders including the Dean of the Graduate School at Rizal Memorial Colleges, the Schools Division Superintendent, the School Principal, and the parents of the participants. This process involved submitting formal letters outlining the research objectives and methodology, accompanied by any supporting documents. This crucial step took place within the first two weeks of October 2023, ensuring that all necessary permissions were in place before proceeding with the collection of data. This proactive approach not only facilitated compliance with ethical standards but also fostered a cooperative environment among all parties involved. Asking permission from the Schools Division Superintendent. Upon receiving the endorsement, I requested permission from the school's division superintendent. This required submitting a formal letter detailing the research proposal and its significance to the educational community. Along with the letter, I attached Chapters 1 and 2 of my dissertation and the research instrument, clearly explaining the study's objectives and the process of participant identification. Moreover, I waited for the response from the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) before proceeding with the data collection. This

step was done during the last two weeks of October 2023, ensuring that all necessary approvals were in place to conduct the research ethically and effectively. Asking for permission from the school heads. Once permission was granted, I sought approval from the school heads of the selected institutions. This step involved submitting formal request letters to each school head, outlining the research's purpose and the expected data collection timeframe. I asked for permission to conduct the study from the first week of November 2023 to the last week of the same month. Obtaining consent from the participants. With the school heads' approval, I asked for consent from the research participants through informed consent forms that were provided to them. These forms clearly explained the research purpose, participant rights, and confidentiality measures. This consent process ensured that participants were fully informed and agreed to participate. Asking for consent from the participants was done in the second week of November 2023. Conducting the interview. Upon securing consent from all participants, I scheduled and conducted the interviews using a structured or semi-structured interview guide to ensure consistency and reliability in data collection. The interviews took place in the last two weeks of November 2023. Transcribing the responses of the interviewees. Following the interview sessions, I meticulously transcribed the interviewees' remarks, taking diligent account of non-verbal cues and contextually relevant details. This procedure used audio recordings and field notes to comprehensively capture the breadth of participants' reactions. The transcription of interviewee responses was done on the first week of December 2024.

2.8. *Data Analysis*—After collecting the data, I embarked on data coding and thematic content analysis. This involved methodically structuring the transcribed data into categories,

subcategories, and themes from the interview dialogues. By discerning patterns and connections within the data, I formulated conclusions and gleaned insights directly related to the research

objectives. This process allowed me to interpret the data effectively, ensuring that the findings accurately reflected the experiences and perspectives of the participants. In this study, I employed Creswell's Thematic Analysis approach, which is particularly suited for encompassing a range of perspectives and portrayals in participants' feedback. Adopting thematic analysis authenticated the portrayal of individual components and facilitated the categorization of identified patterns within the provided responses. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research technique used to recognize, scrutinize, and interpret patterns or themes present within qualitative data in textual, visual, or other formats. As a qualitative research approach, thematic analysis allowed researchers to systematically arrange and dissect complex data sets. It involved searching for overarching themes that encapsulate the narratives embedded within the data. This process necessitated the identification of themes through meticulous examination and repeated review of transcribed data (Dawadi, 2020). This methodical approach helps ensure that the analysis is both comprehensive and reflective of the data collected, providing

deep insights into the study's objectives. Therefore, I used Creswell's Thematic Analysis in my research, which necessitated extensive theming and transcript interpretation. According to Caulfield (2020), there are multiple essential phases in Creswell's Thematic Analysis, including familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and labeling themes, and writing up. I became fully immersed in the intricacies and subtleties of the content as I became acquainted with the data to begin this process. After that, I started categorizing the data using semantic richness to group different informational components. I created themes that encapsulate the main ideas of the data using these codes. After that, these themes were examined and improved upon to make sure they appropriately depict the dataset. Every theme has a definition and name that elucidates the fundamental ideas. The last step entailed combining the themes and insights into a cohesive article that clearly conveys the study's conclusions. This methodical approach guaranteed a comprehensive examination and enhanced the comprehension of the information.

2.9. *Framework of Analysis*—The analytical framework in phenomenological research is a methodical and structured approach to data analysis, interpretation, and presentation. In this research study, I made use of Colaizzi's method to analyse data from the interviews and discussions with the participants regarding their lived experiences in the new setup of face-to-face classes. According to Morrow et al. (2021), Colaizzi's (1978) method features a distinctive seven-step process that offers a rigorous analysis, closely adhering to the data at each stage. This method culminates in a concise yet comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study, which is validated by the participants who experienced it. The effectiveness of this

approach relies on rich first-person accounts of experiences, which can be collected through various means. Although face-to-face interviews are common, data can also be gathered from written narratives, blogs, research diaries, online interviews, and other forms. This method enabled researchers to uncover emergent themes and explore the intricate relationships between them (Wirihana et al., 2018). Data Familiarization. By reading and rereading the transcripts several times, I fully understood the meanings conveyed by the participants and gained a global sense of the phenomenon being studied. This thorough review process was crucial for fully grasping the nuances of participants' statements, enabling a deeper analysis of their experiences.

**Identifying Significant Statements.** I carefully identified every statement in the narratives that is directly related to the phenomenon I am studying. In order to identify and highlight phrases and descriptions that shed light on the particular experiences under study, a thorough examination of the gathered data such as written narratives or transcripts of interviews was conducted. This step was essential to ensuring that my analysis stayed on topic and provided a strong basis for future thematic development.

**Formulating Meanings.** After carefully examining the important statements, I determined meanings that are pertinent to the phenomenon. Although Colaizzi admits that complete bracketing is never truly possible, I had to reflexively "bracket" my own presuppositions to stick closely to the phenomenon as experienced. To guarantee that the analysis stays rooted in the participants' real experiences, this process entailed putting aside my own interpretations as much as is practical.

**Clustering Themes.** I ensured a rigorous analysis that remained true to the participants' experiences by grouping the identified meanings into themes that are shared by all accounts. Throughout this process, presuppositions must be bracketed, especially to avoid any possible influence from existing theories. By letting the themes naturally arise from the data rather than being influenced by outside forces, this preserved the integrity of the analysis. Developing an exhaustive descrip-

tion. I incorporated every theme generated in the previous step into a comprehensive and all-encompassing description of the phenomenon that I wrote. By identifying common themes from the participant accounts, this thorough description conveyed the essence and complexity of the phenomenon. By taking this step, it was ensured that the final representation presented a comprehensive perspective of the experiences that each participant has had. Producing the fundamental structure. I broke down the lengthy explanation into a succinct, concise statement that highlights the key elements that I believed are crucial to understanding the phenomenon's structure. The essence of the participants' experiences was effectively and concisely communicated through this succinct synthesis, which concentrated on the essential components that are necessary for comprehending the phenomenon. Seeking verification of the fundamental structure. I asked participants if the fundamental structure statement accurately reflects their experience by returning it to all participants. I went back and change the earlier stages of the analysis in light of their comments. Through this iterative process, the validity and credibility of the findings were increased, and the analysis was kept firmly based on the perspectives of the participants. The following figure illustrates this rigorous process, highlighting each step to comprehensively explain the actions taken to comprehensively analyze the data.

*2.10. Trustworthiness of the Study*—The trustworthiness of a study was about how reliable, sensible, and authentic the research results were, ensuring that the conclusions are trustworthy and accurate. In qualitative research, factors like credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability are often used to evaluate how reliable the study is. These considerations are further described below, according to Guba (1981). Credibility. Building credibility entails

proving that the results are accurate. Credibility is important for this study because it evaluates if the results accurately represent the realities and experiences of sophomore students who participate in extra-curricular activities. I conversed with the participants for a long time in order to gain a thorough understanding of their experiences and to increase my credibility. I also used triangulation, gathering information from a variety of sources, including observa-

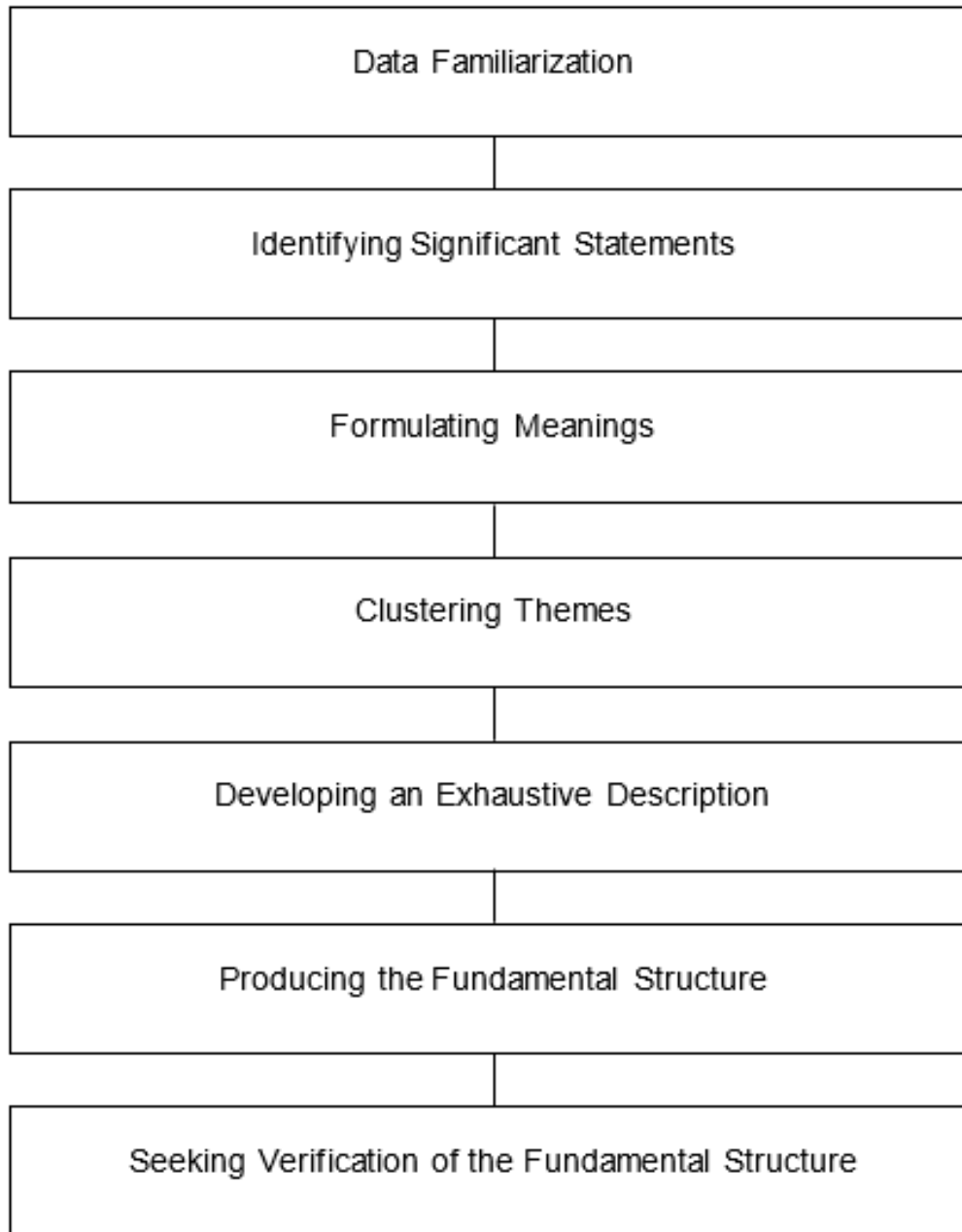


Fig. 2. Analytical Framework of the Study

tions, interviews, and questionnaires. In order to confirm the interpretations, I gave the participants a preliminary version of the findings as part of member checking. Transferability. The degree to which the results of this study can be used in different situations or with different populations is referred to as transferability. While the particular insights were closely linked to elementary school teachers' experiences in a specific educational environment, I give a thorough explanation of the research context and methodology. The study's transferability was increased because these thorough, rich narratives enabled others, including educators, school administrators, and researchers, to assess how well the results apply to comparable contexts or populations. Confirmability. Confirmability deals with the study's objectivity by making sure that the respondents, not my personal prejudices or biases, shaped the findings. I kept a thorough audit trail that details every step of the research process, from data collection to data analysis decisions, in order to ensure confirmability. This method-

ological transparency made it possible for other researchers to evaluate the research's objectivity by following the study's development and going over the choices made. Dependability. Dependability means proving that the study results were reliable and repeatable in similar situations. This study's dependability was attained through meticulous documentation of the entire research procedure, including the methods used for data collection and analysis. By ensuring that other researchers can duplicate the study and possibly produce consistent results, such documentation validates the research's dependability. By following these standards, the research not only offers valid and trustworthy conclusions regarding the effects of extra-curricular activities on sophomore students, but it also offers a framework that researchers and other educators can use to compare similar learning environments. This methodology enhanced the study's standing in the academic community and provided insightful information for upcoming studies and instructional design.

### 3. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results generated from the analysis of the gathered data from the interview, including the themes and a comprehensive discussion that answers the objectives of the study. The themes that emerged from the gathered data were discussed in this chapter. The result presents the description and background of the participants along with their assigned pseudonyms to hide their identities.

*3.1. Experiences of Elementary School Teachers in the Face-to-Face Classroom Environment*—In 2021, hundreds of public schools around the country started implementing limited face-to-face classes in accordance with DepEd Memorandum No. 85, s. 2021, entitled "Preparations for the Implementation of the Expanded Phase of Face-To-Face Classes" (Gildo, 2022). This memorandum marks the resumption of face-to-face classes at any level nationwide. Guidelines and plans were estab-

lished to mitigate possible risks, ensure learning continuity, and protect the safety, health, and well-being of the students. The reopening of classes paved the way for a new classroom environment driven by technology and learning management platforms. In this part of the paper, the experiences of elementary school teachers in the new classroom environment will be the focus of discussion. During the interview, the participants were asked questions regarding their unique experiences in the face-to-face

classroom setting that is far different from the old one. The interview yielded three themes and

these themes will be discussed thoroughly and individually.

*3.1.1. Adaptation of Hybrid Learning Environment*—One key aspect of a hybrid learning environment is the integration of technology into the classroom. When face-to-face classes reopened after the spread of the virus subsided, the schools did not abandon online learning. Teachers still use technology in their teaching, especially when students cannot be present in a face-to-face class due to calamities such as earthquakes. Eliveria et al. (2019) highlight that effective hybrid instruction involves providing opportunities for students to interact with content and engage in learning activities before, during, and after face-to-face classes. This approach maximizes learning outcomes by combining traditional classroom instruction with online resources and activities, allowing for greater flexibility and engagement. In the context of the Philippines, hybrid learning is characterized by integrating online and face-to-face learning activities in a planned and pedagogically valuable manner. This approach involves replacing some face-to-face class time with online activities, allowing for greater flexibility in learning. In hybrid learning settings, certain learning activities and assignments are shifted from the traditional classroom to the distance learning environment, providing students with a blended learning experience. The participants have mentioned that compared to

the face-to-face class pre-pandemic, the new classroom environment offers a hybrid learning environment utilizing both online and offline learning. Ferreira et al. (2018) stated that there is a growing interest among students in a hybrid learning model blending physical and virtual engagement as face-to-face classes resume post-pandemic. The hybrid learning environment, making use of both physical and online classes, offers more dynamic and flexible learning because the teachers can utilize the internet and technology any time of the day while the students can access the assignments and necessary resources they need. The participants also mentioned how hybrid learning has transformed the way they interact and connect with their students. Unlike before where teachers can only meet their students within the school premises, in the new classroom environment, teachers and students can interact online. According to Butnaru et al. (2021), online learning is effective in increasing learning opportunities through various online platforms. Learning with technology enables students to easily access experts, select from a wide range of courses, engage in student-based communities, and benefit from an online learning environment. Similar sentiments were echoed in Santos (2020), where learners highlighted the advantages of online learning, including access to up-to-date, globally relevant information with ease.

*3.1.2. Development of Learner-Centered activities*—Implementing a learner-centered approach, where learners hold full responsibility and accountability for their learning, presents a challenge for educators. It necessitates teachers to act as facilitators and evaluators in their instructional methods. Learner-centered learning demands teachers to be attentive and dis-

cerning since learners are actively engaged and responsible for their learning journey. However, in the new classroom environment, the teachers can easily create a learner-centered environment since educators have become more adept at leveraging technology and alternative teaching methods to engage students and personalize their learning experiences. Unlike the



previous face-to-face class pre-pandemic, the new classroom environment offers a learning environment more focused on the needs and preferences of learners. According to one of the participants (S2), the new learning environment places more priority on meeting the diverse needs and interests of their students. Bell et al. (2018) mentioned in their study that improving the student experience requires educators to synchronize their teaching approaches with student expectations and utilize digital tools to enhance interaction. The rise of digital learning during the pandemic has placed more emphasis on the importance of technology and the internet and its role in the student's continual learning. However, given the diverse preferences among students, there's no one-size-fits-all solution, necessitating educators to tailor approaches based on individual needs (Aguinis et al., 2019). Employing technology to provide

*3.1.3. Less Flexibility in Instruction*—During the pandemic's peak, teachers were forced to explore teaching methods without risking the health and safety of their students. As a result, educational institutions resorted to online or blended learning so that the students could still learn within the confines of their homes. This exploration of teaching methods enabled teachers to find instruction that works. However, they also experience problems with flexing their instruction because it is difficult for them to flex their instruction to fit all types of learners. The new classroom environment post-pandemic presents opportunities for flexible instruction. After the pandemic, there are now more flexible classroom instruction options. A noteworthy component of this adaptability stems from the knowledge gained during the pandemic, specifically in regard to the extensive implementation of remote and hybrid learning approaches. In order to engage students in both in-person and remote learning environments, educators are compelled to explore a variety of instructional

personalized learning enables teachers to customize their lessons and discussions according to the learning preferences and needs of each student. Furthermore, the availability and accessibility of information underscore the need for education to transition from merely transmitting knowledge to developing skills (Siegel, 2021). Since the return to face-to-face classes, teachers have adapted their teaching styles to create a more learner-centered classroom environment. Some of the participants shared that they are prioritizing the needs, interests, and learning styles of their students by tailoring their lessons to accommodate the students and promote active participation. Brown University (2022) stated that active participation in the process of knowledge acquisition is crucial for students' learning, involving steps such as receiving information, processing it, applying it to problems, and communicating their understanding.

strategies and digital resources. More adaptable teaching strategies have been made possible by this growing comfort and familiarity with technology. The evolution of the classroom environment, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, has ushered in a paradigm shift towards greater flexibility in instruction. Comparatively, the new classroom environment is undeniably superior in its ability to accommodate diverse learning needs, adapt to changing circumstances, and leverage innovative teaching methodologies. Based on the narratives of the participants, with the proliferation of digital tools, online resources, and virtual learning platforms, they now have unprecedented opportunities to deliver instruction in a flexible manner. The teachers are adept at incorporating interactive exercises, multimedia information, and teamwork tools into their classes with ease, all while accommodating various learning preferences and styles. This finding is similar to the study conducted by Torres-Vallejos et al. (2021) who stated that in contrast to traditional class-

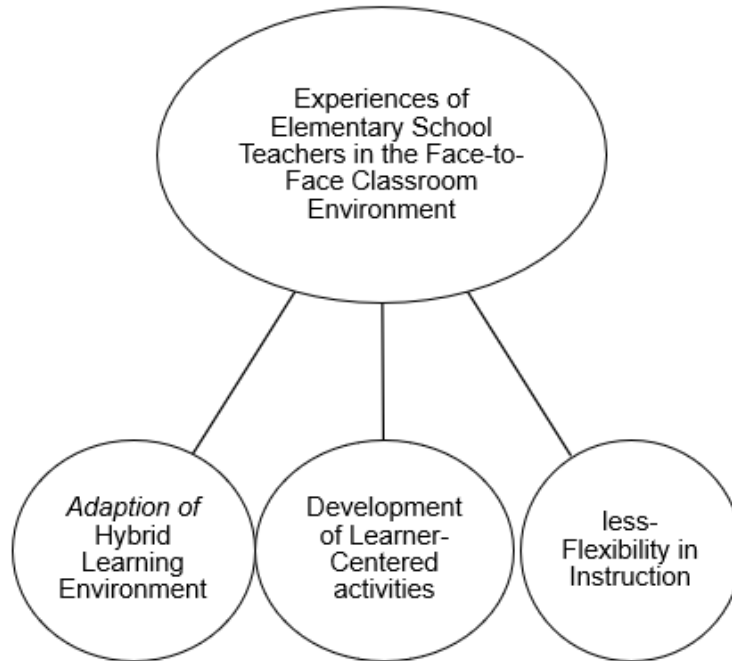


Fig. 3. Experiences of Elementary School Teachers in the Face-to-Face Classroom Environment

room teaching, online instruction imposes no strict constraints on time and space, offering abundant high-quality learning materials and affording significant flexibility and convenience for educators. According to Thahir et al. (2023), online teaching post-pandemic is popular due to its multiple benefits such as its flexibility and convenience. The flexibility in instruction allows access to learning materials anytime, anywhere, contributing to a more adaptable educational environment. The participants shared that they gained the liberty to tailor their instruction to meet the needs of the students; additionally, with the flexibility in teaching, the teachers can also adjust the pace of their instruction to cater to all the learning needs of the students, offering a more individualized learning experience. Jones et al. (2019) opined that there is a pressing need for educators to adapt teaching approaches to accommodate these evolving preferences of the children. Gone are the days when the learn-

ing comes directly from the teacher, not the experience. As the educational landscape evolves, educators can meet the varied needs of students by harnessing the available digital tools. Shi and Wu (2021) also emphasized the necessity for educators to adapt their teaching methods, resources, and assessment approaches in response to evolving circumstances. This adaptation involves a shift in mindset toward flexibility in learning, mastery of technology, a deeper understanding of learners to facilitate their education, and adjustments in teaching strategies and time allocation to align with curriculum demands (Jackaria, 2022). Figure 3 shows the Experiences of Elementary School Teachers in the Face-to-face classroom environment; the emerging themes observed are the adoption of a hybrid learning environment and innovative teachers, the development of learner-centered activities, and less flexibility in Instruction.

3.2. *How Elementary School Teachers Cope with the Problems of their Face-to-Face Classroom Environment*—The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted education, necessitating a quick adaptation of educational institutions and teachers to remote learning settings. Elementary school teachers now have to tackle the difficult job of returning to traditional face-to-face classroom settings as the world begins to slowly emerge from the grip of the pandemic. But going back to familiar settings has its own set of difficulties and unknowns.

Navigating the unfamiliar terrain of the post-pandemic classroom presents novel challenges for elementary school teachers, impacting both their instructional approach and the educational journey of their students. The manner in which teachers confront these obstacles profoundly influences the learning atmosphere. Effective coping mechanisms are essential for educators

to surmount these hurdles successfully. This section of the paper will explore the strategies employed by elementary school teachers to manage the complexities of the new classroom environment. Through interviews with participants, two overarching themes emerged, each warranting thorough and individual examination.

3.2.1. *Technical Knowledge and Resources Competence*—Following the pandemic, elementary school teachers confront many challenges when resuming in-person instruction, including limited technical expertise and resource availability. Navigating new digital tools and platforms for communication, instruction, and assessment can be challenging for teachers. In a blender or hybrid learning environment, teachers may struggle to support learners and provide lessons if they are not proficient in using these tools. These difficulties are exacerbated by insufficient access to resources like gadgets, internet connectivity, and instructional software. As elementary school teachers begin in-person instruction following the pandemic, they must address technical expertise and resource issues to cope with the challenges experienced by the teachers. Teachers can overcome these obstacles by using appropriate coping methods and providing their students with exciting and productive learning opportunities. When transitioning to a learning environment driven by technology, challenges in technical knowledge and resources are expected. Based on the interviews I had with the participants, they had a problem with the digital tools available for teaching. One

of the participants (S5) stated that navigating the technological aspect of hybrid learning has been a steep learning curve. This finding is similar to the results of Mahyoob's (2020) study, in which he identified technical issues as the most significant challenge learners face in terms of instrumental support. Basic tasks such as accessing course materials and troubleshooting proved difficult for some, while others encountered obstacles in joining online synchronous classes or opening exams on their mobile devices. Aside from the insufficient technological knowledge of teachers, the problem of the digital divide is hindering the students as well from being able to attend the flexible set-up of the school. According to one of the participants (S2), some of the students lack access to some necessary technology or reliable internet connectivity and ensuring equitable learning is a struggle. In the same vein, Dayagbil et al. (2021) also found in their research that technological challenges often stemmed from low internet connectivity and the inability to afford necessary devices. These challenges highlight the reality that not all learners have access to the requisite technologies for online learning. While some may possess smartphones, they may be unable to af-

ford an internet connection. Such discrepancies in accessibility exacerbate the gap and inequalities between students with robust access and

those without strong connectivity. In general, the lack of technological skills may lead students to discontinue their education.

3.2.2. *Teacher Self-Efficacy*—Holzberger et al. (2013) defined teacher self-efficacy (TSE) as the confidence individuals have in their ability to effectively teach students, even in challenging circumstances. The reopening of face-to-face instruction following the pandemic has presented educators in elementary schools with a number of challenges, especially with regard to their effectiveness in the classroom. Teachers experience interruptions to established routines and expectations when switching back from remote or hybrid learning to traditional instruction, leaving them feeling uncertain and incompetent. Being tasked with numerous responsibilities simultaneously, teachers find themselves grappling with the challenges of resuming in-person instruction. Alongside ensuring learners' academic progress, they bear the weight of safeguarding their health and well-being, ensuring they remain free from any potential risks. Juggling these multifaceted responsibilities significantly impacts their teaching efficacy, often leading to self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy. Navigating the resumption of face-to-face classes post-pandemic presents challenges to teachers' efficacy in the classroom. By employing effective coping strategies, teachers can bolster their confidence and create a positive and supportive learning environment for their students. The rapid shift from traditional classroom settings prior to the pandemic to online and distance learning during the pandemic, followed by the emergence of hybrid or blended learning models in the post-pandemic era, has presented educators with the formidable task of swiftly adapting to the evolving educational landscape. Poulou et al. (2018) showed that before the pandemic, educators generally had high levels of self-efficacy in instructional domains.

However, the onset of the global health crisis introduced new challenges for teachers, impacting their self-efficacy due to the rapid adjustments required in teaching methods (Andreou, et al., 2022). Through my interviews with the participants, it became apparent that teachers perceive a decline in their effectiveness compared to before, particularly in instructional delivery. Feelings of doubt and inadequacy about their skills have impeded their ability to provide effective instruction. According to one participant (S1), the shift to hybrid learning and the need to quickly adapt to the changes made them feel overwhelmed which led them to doubt their abilities. This result corroborates the assertion made by Pressley and Ha (2021) who found that elementary school teachers in the United States experienced reduced levels of instructional and engagement efficacy during the pandemic. The challenges described have also led to emotional and mental distress. According to one participant (A9), the switch to face-to-face class caused them to feel emotionally distressed. It is evident from various studies that the primary burden and most significant challenges of online learning are borne by teachers. This includes the need for teachers to rethink their teaching methodologies and undergo extensive training to effectively navigate the online learning landscape (Talidong Toquero, 2023). Unfortunately, there is a shortage of psychological first aid providers in schools (Manza et al., 2021), leaving teachers to shoulder this responsibility alongside their teaching duties. These educators, who are the frontline workers in education, are themselves experiencing stress due to COVID-19, which can impact the well-being of their students (UNICEF, 2021). As schools continue to plan for full-time face-

to-face classes, it's crucial to acknowledge the various challenges that teacher frontliners may encounter. According to Barni (2019), teachers' self-efficacy plays a significant role in determining teaching effectiveness, serving as a powerful motivator that influences classroom behavior and dedication. To cope with the feeling of doubt and incompetence in their teaching, the participants shared that they seek out support and help from their colleagues. Additionally, the participants also mentioned that they employ self-reflection and mindfulness to address their emotional distress and to boost their confidence in teaching. It was indicated in Tripathy's (2019) study that well-adjusted teachers tend to deliver superior and higher-quality instruction while effectively managing student issues. Another related study conducted by Leonardo and Cha (2021) also supports this finding because they discovered in their investigation that teachers with high self-efficacy were better equipped to maintain composure and overcome challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the participants also men-

*3.3. Insights Drawn from the findings of the Focused on the Face-to-Face Classroom Environment*—A dynamic fusion of in-person, remote, and hybrid learning modalities characterizes the post-pandemic classroom environment, as educational institutions around the globe continue to adjust to the problems presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of this change, strict health and safety regulations have had to be put in place to protect the health of kids, teachers, and staff. In addition to these procedures, educational institutions have embraced digital technology to support hybrid and distant learning. As a result, teachers must learn how to integrate digital tools and platforms into their lesson plans. Opportunities and difficulties are presented by this digital integration, underscoring the need for continuous professional development and support for educators.

Furthermore, the pandemic's disruption has highlighted how crucial it is to give social-emotional learning top priority and offer support services to students and teachers to meet their mental health needs. In order to guarantee that all students have equitable access to the resources and skills they require for success,

tioned that to be effective in teaching in the new classroom environment, they seek out professional development opportunities to constantly equip themselves with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to navigate the new learning environment. Studies have consistently demonstrated that teacher self-efficacy enhances teachers' effectiveness (Hussain Khan, 2022). These findings align with the assertions made by Morris, et al. (2017) who suggest that teacher self-efficacy serves as a subjective measure of teachers' capabilities in performing teaching tasks. Garvis and Pendergast (2016) discovered that self-efficacy enhances the effectiveness of teachers by fostering commitment, enthusiasm, determination, resilience, understanding of struggling students, openness to new methods and ideas, utilization of hands-on teaching approaches, and organizational skills.

Figure 4 shows elementary school teachers coping with the problems of their face-to-face classroom environment; two emerging themes were observed, namely, technical knowledge and resource competence and teachers' self-efficacy.

schools must also address the gaps in students' access to technology and other resources. All things considered, the post-pandemic classroom setting is a complicated and dynamic terrain that needs flexibility, inventiveness, and cooperation from educators, administrators, and stakeholders to successfully traverse. Insights gleaned

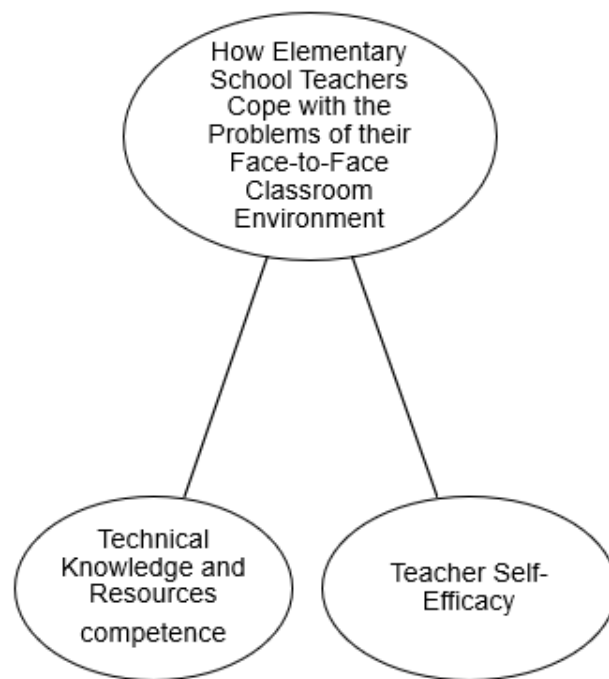


Fig. 4. How Elementary School Teachers Cope with the Problems of their Face-To-Face Classroom Environment

from this study focused on the new classroom environment offer valuable guidance for education management, informing strategies to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented

*3.3.1. Upskilled teachers*—One important component that gives teachers a clear edge in adjusting to the post-pandemic educational environment is upskilling. Teachers with advanced skills and competencies are better able to meet students' changing needs and make effective use of digital tools and platforms in the classroom as schools adopt blended or hybrid learning models and technology-driven instructional approaches. Upskilling gives teachers a competitive advantage in the post-pandemic classroom by giving them the competencies, information, and abilities necessary to succeed in a constantly shifting educational environment. Educators can become more effective, empower their students, and help create inclusive, creative, and stimulating learning environments by embracing chances for professional development and ongoing learning. Continuous upskilling is essential for educators to proficiently plan and execute pedagogical programs in order to adeptly navigate the demands of the new classroom environment, especially with the prevalence of online and flexible education formats. The participants have learned from their experience that they need to constantly improve their skills and knowledge to adapt to the ever-changing world. As the demands of the educational system improve, the teachers must also upskill to keep up with them. According to one participant (S2), in order to flourish in the dynamic environment of education, they must continue to take the initiative to further their personal development. Another participant also mentioned

*3.3.2. Innovativeness of teachers*—Innovation fosters creativity, resilience, and flexibility

by evolving educational landscapes. Throughout the interview with the participants, two distinct themes became apparent. These themes will be comprehensively examined separately.

that to support their learners in the new classroom environment, he needs to upskill himself continually and stay abreast with the emerging trends in education. Joaquin, et al. (2020) suggested that the higher authorities in education must collaborate and should take proactive steps to equip educators for this transition to the digital learning space. The participants, looking back at their experiences in the face-to-face classes, offer recommendations to the teachers who are currently grappling with the new setting. The participants shared that other teachers must constantly advance their careers and prioritize professional development to stay updated with what is new to the educational landscape. In the technology-driven world of education, the post-pandemic era necessitates the acquisition and proficiency of various resources such as software, hardware, and other teaching materials. Educators must familiarize themselves with these technologies to effectively fulfill their roles and adapt to the new learning environment (Lapada, et al., 2020). Teacher professional development programs and personal training have emerged as key factors influencing the success of teachers' digital teaching competence. Essentially, the more teachers engage in professional training focused on developing digital teaching skills, the higher their level of digital teaching knowledge, practice, and acquisition. This finding is consistent with previous research by Gjelaj et al. (2020) which highlighted the crucial role of both personal and professional training in enhancing a teacher's digital competence.

in teaching approaches, all of which are vital for educators to adjust to the new classroom en-

vironment that has emerged after the pandemic. Educators who embrace innovation are better able to address the different needs of students and negotiate the difficulties of modern education when schools adopt hybrid or blended learning models and use technology in instruction. In order to cater to the varied needs of students and equip them for success in a world that is changing constantly, educators can build dynamic and engaging learning environments by embracing innovative teaching practices, effectively utilizing technology, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. As highlighted in Muhammad et al. (2022) research, teachers are tasked with innovating their classroom management practices by introducing engaging activities, enhancing interpersonal interactions with students, and implementing effective assessment strategies. Teachers' experiences enabled them to learn this lesson the hard way. To meet the varied needs of the students and create an engaging and dynamic classroom, they need to constantly innovate and improve their teaching methodologies. According to the participants, innovation has become increasingly important in the face-to-face classroom since teachers need to regularly adjust and adapt to changing trends. In the transition to limited face-to-face classroom interaction, both learners and teachers undergo adjustments. Despite the inevitable challenges that come with prepara-

tion, teachers have strategies to overcome them. When confronted with trials, maintaining a positive attitude and unwavering commitment to the profession is crucial for teachers. According to Hayahay and Alayon (2023), teachers must find ways to modify their practices to align with new circumstances or conditions, all while receiving support from everyone involved. The experiences of the participants prompted them to recommend that to overcome the challenges in the new classroom environment, the teachers must become proactive and constantly innovate. According to the participants, teachers must prioritize innovation and creativity in their teaching methodologies. This recommendation aligns with Anero and Tamayo's study where it was found that the teachers employed innovative teaching approaches to adapt to the new educational landscape. Teachers need to innovate not merely to stay ahead of the curve in education but also to stay relevant. Adopting cutting-edge techniques allows teachers to design dynamic, captivating learning spaces that cater to students' varied requirements and equip them for success in a constantly changing world. Figure 5 shows the Insights drawn from the findings of the study focused on the face-to-face classroom environment; the emerging theme was observed, namely, the teachers' upskilled and innovativeness teachers.

#### **4. Implications and Future Directions**

In this chapter, the summary of the study is presented, from the summary of the findings, I drew the implications and future directions. The purpose of my study was to find out the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of elementary school teachers pertaining to the new classroom environment. In order to achieve the research objectives, I made use of a qualitative phenomenological method with the use of thematic analysis. In adherence to Cresswell's (2020) guidelines open-ended questions for interviews were applied to get an authentic understanding of people's experiences. Furthermore, through this interview approach, I encouraged my participants to fully and openly discuss their own definition or meaning of the phenomenon being explored which were the narratives of elementary school teachers about the new classroom environment. In light of the unique experiences and narratives of elementary school teachers, three (3) themes



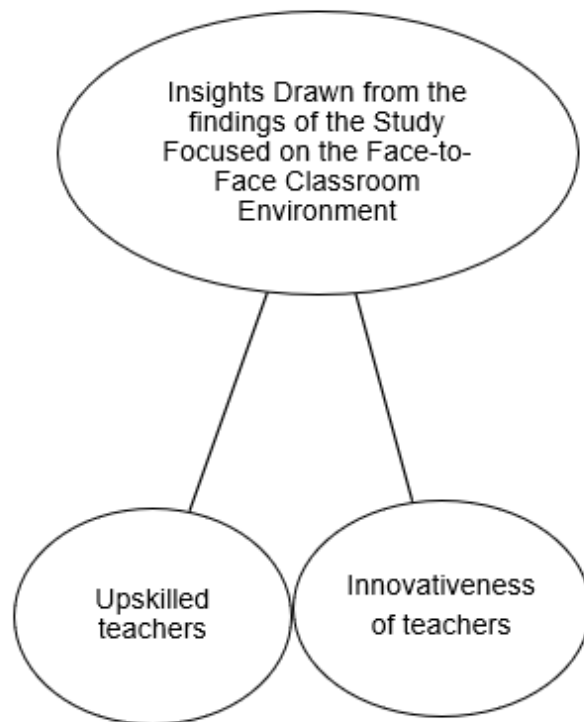


Fig. 5. Insights Drawn from the Findings of the Study Focused on the Face-to-Face Classroom Environment

have emerged as their experiences in the new classroom environment. The first theme is the presence of adaption of a hybrid learning environment hybrid learning. After the pandemic brought by COVID-19, as society slowly came back to normal, the strategies employed remained. Included in these strategies was the integration of technology in schools. Many classes during the pandemic were done online to ensure safety, this required teachers to be more adept in employing technologies in class, hence it is still used to this very day. The second theme was transitioning to the development of learner-centered activities. In the educational landscape, the teacher is now a guide on the side instead of the sage on the stage. Students are now taking center stage and are now responsible for their own learning. The teachers have shared that it helped the students become more involved in the teaching-learning process. The third theme was less flexibility in instruction. As the famous adage goes, there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to classroom instruction. In the interview, the elementary teachers shared that the new classroom set-up or environment has allowed them to be more flexible with their teaching approach, and they have also practiced adaptability with the fast-paced development in the educational scene. Meanwhile, the second research question tackles the coping mechanisms of elementary school teachers when it comes to solving the problems, they have encountered in the new classroom environment. There were two (2) emerging themes under this question. The first theme was technical knowledge and resource competence. Teachers have shared that we have now entered the digital age where there is a great demand for technology to be integrated in the classroom in order to be competitive in the global scene. But with this goes issues of technological knowledge and the availability of resources. Hence, as one of their coping mechanisms, teachers have updated their knowledge and are trying to be educated on the possible application of technology in the classroom. The second theme was teachers' self-efficacy. It has been mentioned that in order to fit into the new classroom environment and be competitive, teachers need to update their knowledge regarding the matter. This way, they would be able to maximize the impact technology has in store for the students. It is also important that teachers learn a great deal of information regarding the new classroom environment in order for them to deliver a successful teaching-learning experience. Finally, the third research question focuses on the insights formulated from the findings. Two (2) themes have been unfurled from the participants' responses. The first one was upskilled of teachers . Now more than ever, teachers have stated that it is vital for them to continually and consistently improve and enhance their knowledge and skills. This will allow them to tailor their instructions to the needs of the students. The second insight was the innovativeness of teachers. The new classroom environment or the post-pandemic classroom environment has more technological integration than the pre-pandemic environment. This was due to the different technologies utilized during the pandemic that are still being applied due to their efficacy. However, teachers also need to innovate on how these technologies should be integrated in order for successful teaching-learning to happen.

*4.1. Findings*—Based on the results of the thematic analysis of the responses from the study participants, the following findings and their corresponding themes were revealed: elementary school teachers' experiences were adaption of hybrid learning environments, development of learner-centered activities, and less flexible in instruction. Meanwhile, their coping mechanisms were technical knowledge competence and resources and teacher self-efficacy. Lastly, the insights drawn are the importance of upskilling and innovativeness.

4.2. *Implications*—The results of my analysis revealed the following significant findings. The new normal classroom environment in the Philippines has seen a significant integration of technology to facilitate learning amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools have embraced various digital tools and platforms to deliver educational content remotely, including video conferencing software like Zoom or Google Meet for online classes and lectures. Additionally, Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Moodle or Google Classroom are used to distribute assignments, quizzes, and other learning materials to learners. Furthermore, there has been an increased reliance on educational apps and online resources to supplement traditional teaching methods. These resources cater to different learning styles and abilities, offering interactive lessons, simulations, and multimedia content to engage students in their learning process. Moreover, digital textbooks and e-books have become more prevalent, providing students with access to a wide range of educational materials anytime, anywhere. In addition to facilitating remote learning, technology is also being utilized to enhance classroom instruction when students are physically present. Interactive whiteboards, projectors, and educational software are used to create dynamic and immersive learning experiences. Teachers are incorporating multimedia elements such as videos, animations, and virtual reality simulations to make lessons more engaging and interactive for students. Overall, the integration of technology in the new normal classroom environment in the Philippines has transformed the way education is delivered and experienced. While challenges such as access to devices and reliable internet connectivity persist, the widespread adoption of digital tools and platforms represents a promising step towards creating more inclusive and flexible learning environments for students across the country. Meanwhile, the integration of technology into the classroom has spurred teachers to upskill and innovate in their approaches to teaching. Recognizing the importance of digital literacy in the modern world, educators have taken proactive steps to enhance their technological proficiency through professional development opportunities, online courses, and self-directed learning. By acquiring new skills and knowledge, teachers are better equipped to leverage technology effectively in their lessons, whether through creating interactive multimedia content, facilitating online discussions, or utilizing educational apps and software. Moreover, teachers have demonstrated remarkable innovation in integrating technology into their teaching practices. They have explored creative ways to engage students and foster meaningful learning experiences through the use of digital tools and platforms. This includes gamification techniques, flipped classroom models, and project-based learning approaches that leverage technology to promote collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among students. By embracing innovation and embracing the potential of technology, teachers are playing a crucial role in shaping the future of education in the Philippines and beyond. To sum up, technology in the classroom is like a key to a treasure trove of endless possibilities, unlocking the door to innovation, engagement, and personalized learning experiences. It's the compass guiding educators through uncharted territories of knowledge, where traditional boundaries are blurred, and curiosity knows no limits. With technology as their trusty sidekick, teachers become architects of interactive realms, sculpting lessons that transcend textbooks, igniting sparks of inspiration in every student's mind. It's the bridge connecting learners from all corners of the globe, transforming classrooms into vibrant hubs of collaboration, where ideas flow freely and cultural barriers dissolve with every click.

4.3. *Future Directions*—Based on the findings of the study, it is important that the findings are properly relayed and used by the significant people whom this research was intended for. The educational leaders. They are more aware of the unique narratives, together with the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms employed by elementary school teachers, through brand-new insights and perspectives regarding the new classroom environment. Once they have recognized the challenges and have reflected on them, they may implement programs or seminars targeting and focusing on enhancing the teacher's skills in the integration of technology in the classroom. The school heads. They are more informed and aware of the experiences of the elementary school teachers about the new classroom environment. Through the findings of the study, they can also extend help to the teachers in order to improve the delivery of instruction in the new normal. They can offer more insightful and useful strategies that would guide and help the teachers with the challenges they are subjected to. The teachers. The findings of the study can properly inform other teachers about the experiences and coping mechanisms employed by the participants for the new classroom environment. The teachers in the classroom can tailor-fit their instruction so that they can deliver information that is helpful for the students. They can also share to students their technological knowledge. Learners. Learners need to take an active role in their continuing education. It is essential to support learners in thinking back on their experiences in the new classroom environment. Teachers can better meet the needs of their students by customizing their approach based on their understanding of their perspectives, challenges, and preferences. Additionally, students become vital collaborators in molding their own education when they offer criticism and suggestions for enhancement, which promotes a feeling of empowerment and ownership. Other stakeholders. They may provide support to better enhance the experience of experiences and challenges brought by the new classroom environment towards the teachers. The stakeholders may be the source of other ways and means to solve some of the challenges faced by the students. The future researchers. They may conduct the study but focus on the student's perspective. It would be beneficial to document the narratives of students about the classroom environment in the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic. If whether they prefer learning in the former or in the latter. This would guide future researchers and educational leaders in designing a classroom environment that is ideal for the students to learn from.

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