



Belitung Nursing Journal

E-ISSN: 2477-4073 | P-ISSN: 2528-181X

Volume 8, Issue 3
May - June 2022

Edited by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yupin Aungsuroch & Dr. Joko Gunawan

The Official Publication of
Belitung Raya Foundation
Department of Publication, Indonesia





Lived experiences of older adults while working in the academe amidst the COVID-19 pandemic: The Philippine context

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Abstract

Background: Despite the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the Philippines and the world, our aging population, especially older adults working in the academe, has not ceased with their desire to provide quality education among our student nurses continuously. Aside from the fact that most of these nursing mentors in the field of education have been closer to the age of retirement, they still opt to continue their passion for teaching. Hence, knowing their lived experiences can be a great anchor on how to support them effectively.

Objective: This study aimed to explore the older adults' lived experiences while working in the academe amidst the pandemic.

Methods: A qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach was employed. Purposive sampling was used to select twelve informants based on the set inclusion criteria, such as older adults aged at least 60 years old and above residing within Cebu City, Philippines, who were currently employed as nursing mentors in any private or public academic nursing institution. Colaizzi's method of data analysis was used.

Results: Four themes emerged: (1) Diversifying Teaching and Learning Strategies, (2) Labyrinthing Through the Challenges, with three subthemes (Coursing through struggles and adversities, Thriving with the teaching and learning during the pandemic, and Coping with the changes), (3) Strengthening Health, Adhering to Protocols, and (4) Moving Forward with the New Normal, with two subthemes (Adapting to be technologically resilient and Having a positive outlook).

Conclusion: The older adults learned to teach, adapt, adjust, and move forward in the academe amidst the pandemic. They keep up with the changes and the challenges despite being an older adult having limited experience and knowledge of the use of technology. They continue to strive, live and be more productive amidst the pandemic.

Keywords

COVID-19; Philippines; academe; phenomenology; older adults; nursing; mentor; aging

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Article info:

Received: 17 March 2022

Revised: 19 April 2022

Accepted: 12 May 2022



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Background

Population aging is a global phenomenon according to the United Nations (2020). Every country in the world is experiencing growth in the size and proportion of older persons in their population. In fact, there were already 703 million persons aged 65 years or over in the world in 2019. The number of older persons is projected to double to 1.5 billion in 2050. Globally, the share of the population aged 65 years or over increased from 6% in 1990 to 9% in 2019. That proportion is projected to rise further to 16% by 2050, so that one in six people in the world will be over the age of 65, up from 1 in 11 in 2019 (United Nations, 2020). Considering that age is an important factor to consider, it is not a hindrance for some older adults to continue being productive in their own fields of practice, specifically in the academe. Perhaps, working in the

academe until old age is not only their means of living but rather their means of socializing and sharing expertise. It might be that keeping their work will help them maintain their positive outlook in life. To some older adults, their maintenance in the workplace keeps their cognitive ability to avoid loss of memory functioning.

While others tend to retire, some older adults remain in their workplaces as academicians. Moreover, research shows that even with the growing number of older adults, many are still motivated to be engaged in universities either for career opportunities or professional advancements (Imlach et al., 2017).

Furthermore, job satisfaction is one of the reasons why older adults keep their positions (De Guzman et al., 2014), being committed and engaging in their work and recording less malingering rather than any age group. As cited by Toropova

et al. (2021), "not only is job satisfaction closely related to teacher retention, but it also contributes to the well-being of teachers and their students, overall school cohesion and enhanced status of the teaching profession".

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were already challenges in the academe, like nurse educators had trouble recognizing learners as individuals in a large class, using innovative pedagogical strategies, and managing a large class (Ndawo, 2016). Indeed, the effects of the pandemic in the academe were quite alarming and challenging. Litvina and Temkina (2021) noted that because of the rising number of COVID cases, the conventional class setup could no longer be applied, where learners and educators experience the struggle, especially when it was temporarily put to halt due to lockdown and immediate closure of all establishments including schools and other educational facilities up until such time that online remote system of learning was then launched which had become a challenge among educators for their work had shifted from the traditional face-to-face to online or remote learning strategy (Flores & Swennen, 2020).

Moreover, in this kind of setting where classroom lectures have been stopped among all universities, one of the most affected are the sciences and medical courses learning not only within the four walls of the classroom but also in the laboratories and hospitals or clinical set-up. Therefore, the educators have been challenged to strategize and explore means to deliver competencies necessary for all the students (Gallo & Trompetto, 2020). Some educators make use of different online platforms; others resort to video conferencing, online consultation with students, use of social media, and other various modalities were utilized which is more on the use of digital and computer technology (König et al., 2020) where some older adults find it something that is difficult for personal and varying reasons (Mohadisududis & Ali, 2014).

Indeed, nurse educators have lots of challenges. According to Younas et al. (2019), educators experience workload and time constraints and struggle to teach students due to inadequate student-educator ratio effectively; underdeveloped curriculum; inadequate resources; inadequate clinical teaching settings for skills, simulation labs; inadequate professional development opportunities; lack of autonomous decision making; and lack of educational, management, and research support from the regulatory bodies.

In 2020, studies on nurse educators found that male educators surmounted various challenges while searching for respect and recognition and felt content with their professional growth. The greatest challenge was discriminative institutional and government policies (Saleh et al., 2020; Zeb et al., 2020). While there is a vast amount of literature studying the effects of COVID-19 among students, there are limited studies exploring the pandemic's impact on educators amidst pandemic. For this reason, our study aimed to describe and explore the lived experiences of the older adults working in the academe amidst the danger brought about by this current health crisis. Exploring this can be a good basis for how we can better assist them in their journey during this challenging time to sustain the quality of education delivery.

Methods

Study Design

A qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach was used to explore the meaning of older adults' working experiences who were working in the academe. Descriptive phenomenology was used for it has laid the foundation for theoretical knowledge and methodological clarity and rigor in qualitative nursing research (Abalos et al., 2016).

Key Informants

In choosing key informants for this study, the proponents utilized purposive sampling. Taking into consideration the saturation point, the informants were 12 older adults who are at least 60 years old, male or female, with at least three years of ongoing teaching experience or are still working in the academe amidst the pandemic, and lastly, must be a registered nurse. Data saturation was the basis for stopping at the 12th informant. They were recruited based on the data given by their deans. Informed consent was acquired from the participants prior to the data gathering.

Data Collection

The selection of the key informants was initiated after the approval of the Review Ethics Committee. Prior to starting the interview, bracketing was done by the researchers. Generation of the data commenced after the identified key informants signed the informed consent and after being set with an interview schedule via an online platform. The practical aspects of the research were explained and discussed with the interviewee, such as the use of a tape recorder, the interview venue, and the time that can be devoted to the interview. Roughly an hour of the one-on-one interview was done using a semi-structured researcher-made interview guide with three parts: warm-up questions, main questions, and probing questions. Open-ended questions were used to give the respondents ample opportunity to express their experiences. Field notes were utilized as well. The main question was, "Can you describe to me your experiences of being an older adult in the academe, especially in this pandemic?" followed by relevant probing questions. Pilot testing and practice interviews were conducted by the researchers and research assistant to prepare for the actual interview with the key informants and to check if the questions can sufficiently explore the working experiences. Data collection was done from September-November 2021. Data collected were then transcribed and re-read multiple times to capture the essence of every experience shared by the key informants.

Data Analysis

Colaizzi's seven steps method of data analysis was used (Abalos et al., 2016). Firstly, the three proponents manually read and re-read all the participants' verbatim transcripts. Next, significant statements or phrases were extracted from participants' transcripts relevant to the phenomenon. Then, formulated meanings were developed from the significant statements. Fourth, formulated meanings were arranged into cluster themes which developed into themes. Then the results were incorporated into a rich and exhaustive description of the working experience. Sixth, the exhaustive description of the

participants involved in the research was validated by the six representative informants (participant checking). Lastly, pertinent data obtained from participants' validation were incorporated and adapted to attain congruence with the working experience of the participants.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To enhance the trustworthiness of this study, the following was made. First, person triangulation was done where auxiliary informants confirmed the statements made by the key informants. In addition, other colleagues (with the same characteristics specified in the inclusion criteria) not included in the key informants were also interviewed to confirm the key informants' statements. Secondly, time triangulation, where the same questions were asked at different time points during the interview (within one hour). Lastly, method triangulation wherein aside from multiple individual interviews, observation was done by the researcher to confirm statements and self-reflection.

Ethical Consideration

The data gathering was done after the participants were informed of the purpose, context, and focus of the study, letting them sign the informed consent thereafter. It was made clear to the older adults that their participation was voluntary. Further, the participants were informed of their anonymity and that the data provided will be kept confidential, and discussion shall be done only within the research team. The participants were also informed that they might opt to answer only those questions they felt comfortable with. Prior to the conduct of the study, ethical clearance was secured by the Ethics Committee (no. 898/2021-06).

Results

Twelve participants were selected based on the set inclusion criteria, as shown in [Table 1](#).

Table 1 Key informants' profile

Key Informants	Age	Civil Status	Experience in the Academe	Reason for Continuing to Work
SQC	62	Married	16 years	Sharing of knowledge
HOF	72	Married	31 years	Financial and reduce boredom
CT	63	Widow	16 years	To be productive
GCA	63	Married	15 years	Share expertise
AAI	67	Married	29 years	Don't want to stagnate
RVG	64	Married	32 years	Loves teaching
LMT	71	Single	47 years	Fruitfulness
DVT	62	Single	27 years	Personal claims
JDLI	64	Single	18 years	Drive to work and desire to still learn
EMV	64	Married	36 years	Means of relieving stress
FTY	70	Married	45 years	Love teaching and reducing boredom
EMG	67	Married	15 years	To prevent Alzheimer's disease

After the extraction of significant statements and the analysis of formulated meanings, four themes emerged. These emerging themes were (1) Diversifying Teaching and Learning Strategies, (2) Labyrinthine Through the Challenges, with three subthemes (Coursing through struggles and adversities, Thriving with the teaching and learning during the pandemic, and Coping with the changes), (3) Strengthening Health, Adhering to Protocols, and (4) Moving Forward with the New Normal, with two subthemes (Adapting to be technologically resilient and Having a positive outlook) ([Figure 1](#)). Each of the emergent themes is defined and discussed with excerpts from the transcripts used to support and highlight each theme.

Theme 1: Diversifying Teaching and Learning Strategies

It is evident that the pandemic has affected all aspects of society. It has caused many changes in the lives of people across the globe. All sectors of society have either to modify their ways to be able to cope with this pandemic. Among these sectors of society, the educational system has experienced a major setback in its delivery of quality education since face-to-face classes have been suspended for the risks it poses to the transmission. [Dayagbil et al. \(2021\)](#) noted that the disruption of COVID-19 in the educational system is of great magnitude that universities must cope with at the soonest possible time. Students are contained in their own homes, considering the alternative learning modalities. To alleviate this education

turmoil, classes were delivered through an online platform. This is not something new since some education institutions have been using this learning platform; however, this is being upscaled because of the convenience it poses for students to learn in this time of the pandemic.

Seven key informants shared their experiences in diversifying their teaching and learning strategies to be able to deliver learning instructions effectively and be able to adapt to the use of technology in online classes. One shared being a traditional type of teacher and that teaching is more on doing it in a physical classroom setting:

"I consider myself as traditional in my way of teaching nursing concepts. I am used to doing a class lecture in front of a big class; however, this style of teaching is not feasible now. I allowed myself to learn about google classroom and google meet in doing my lecture to my students now." (Participant 1, SS3)

Some of the participants shared their encounters with the use of different online learning platforms, which to some were not that well-versed in the use of the different platforms:

"When I learned about the use of this google meet for my class, it became much easier on my part to handle my class. At first, there were many struggles, but eventually, I became used to it. Of course, we really need to become adaptive with our current setup and the way we teach our students" (Participant 2, SS5)

"We do interact through Zoom or Messenger, and even do it at night at times because of the working students. I just adjust my time, and I also enjoy this work" (Participant 2, SS15)

"We use MS Teams since Moodle sometimes crashes, thus using MS Teams as our back-up. Before we used Zoom, but now we use MS Teams since we're getting used to it already." (Participant 9, SS7)

"I would say many schools, be it nursing schools or other programs, were caught flat-footed more than a year ago when the

pandemic was declared, and restrictions were imposed. So, even the most advanced universities were caught flat-footed, and they could think of virtual classes." (Participant 7, SS1)

"Because I have my children with me who are also very good with computers, they were the ones who taught me. One of my sons is also an assistant dean in MedTech, so he can also assist me in the online setup. If I'm doing it alone, it would be very hard for me, honestly." (Participant 3, SS12)

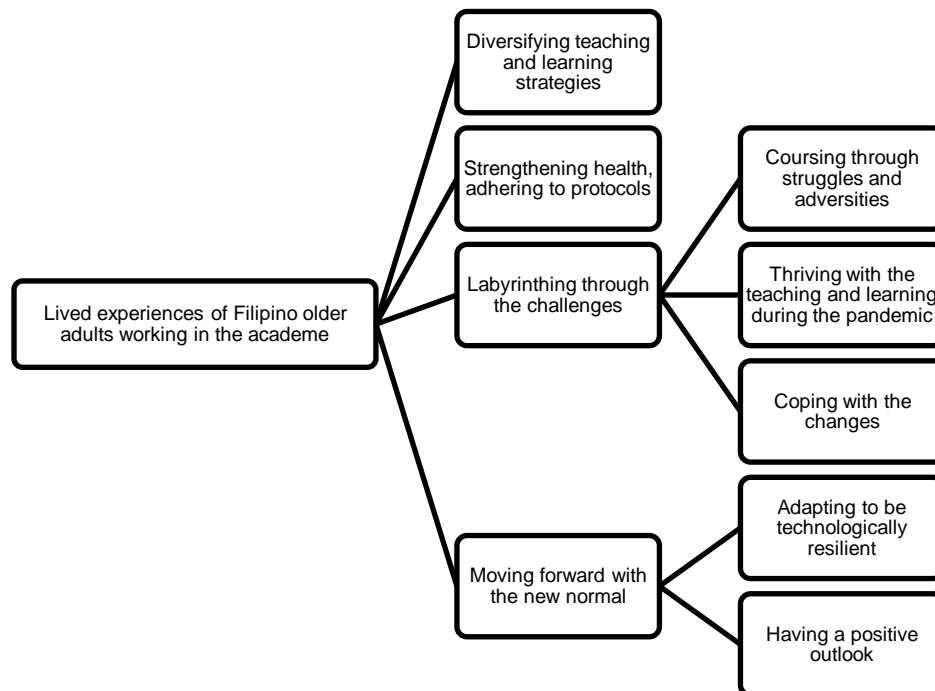


Figure 1 Synthesis of themes and corresponding subthemes

Because of the limitations brought about by the online learning setup, there are some learning activities that were being modified to facilitate the learning needs of the students effectively:

"During the online learning, especially in the skills lab, I do actual demonstrations on IV therapy and blood transfusion. I record them and show the videos to my students. After I share the demos with them, my students also do return demonstrations wherein they also record the procedures on video." (Participant 8, SS4)

"My mind was so confused as to how I could be able to teach the students, and they would be able to retain even a little from what they've learned from me. So, what I did was teach with simulation and watching YouTube videos. We used everything for them to learn, like for example for the OR instruments, I teach them using visuals." (Participant 12, SS3)

Some of the key informants shared their transitioning to an alternative teaching-learning modality which encouraged them to be more adept in the use of technology in the delivery of teaching-learning materials; six out of twelve mentioned that:

"The experience, or the challenge, is more on the switch in teaching modality -- from face to face to online -- of course, you know, the use of gadgets, and making use of the technology in the design and on the delivery of the instructions." (Participant 7, SS9)

"I provided them not only my slides but also supplemental notes to reinforce for more understanding to them, to afford more understanding to the topic." (Participant 4, SS10)

"We had our training after the ECQ in the school; that was when the seniors were already allowed to go out. Since we also have faculty members who are good at computers, they taught us how to conduct exams virtually and how to navigate with Zoom and other platforms. I realized there are a lot of options and platforms you can choose from." (Participant 3, SS13)

"As an older adult, it was very difficult at first, but after several weeks, I enjoyed the training. We were trained how to use Moodle, which we are using as our Learning Management System (LMS). That's part 1. The next month we had part 2. It has three stages or parts for the whole training. As we move to another stage, the difficulty level is also going up. Nevertheless, I really enjoyed the training." (Participant 9, SS3)

"I'm having a harder time with online learning than the pandemic itself per se. However, with my previous affiliation, I became fond of using the computer so the faculty and other coordinators would appreciate me since I'm a fast learner with the technology, even with my age." (Participant 10, SS6)

"To keep me on track, I will attend seminars related to the new setup, which is virtual learning. You know, I would say that partly I learn because in every institution they have different platforms, but when you start to check requirements, they are quite different from

back then, but along the way when we first started back in 2020 up until today, I am still learning the institution's Learning Management System." (Participant 11, SS6)

As part of the new normal in teaching, one key informant recalled the effectiveness of a group chat to facilitate the sharing of additional information from both the instructors and the students:

"Our group chat is very handy because if ever my students have additional info, or I have an additional assignment, then it will be easy for everyone to track it since our group chat is there all the time to update." (Participant 5, SS8)

One key informant shared experience of adopting the learning management system adopted by the university in response to the pandemic. This led them to learn this system and modify their ways of delivering learning and teaching strategies:

"Because of the pandemic, in every institution, they are having their own elements and Learning Management System, so I must learn since I am not good with this setup." (Participant 11, SS5)

Looking into this alternative learning modality, it is not just the students experiencing challenges and struggles in keeping up with online classes. Primarily, educators who are the designers and builders of the learning experience also encounter challenges and struggles in keeping up with this learning platform. In nursing, a quiet number of educators have been accustomed to the face-to-face way of learning platform. Some are also traditional in their ways of teaching and are not that well-versed in the use of technology.

The different strategies used by the older adults in the academe during the switch from face-to-face classes to the online platform include exploring the different online platforms that cater to audiovisual teaching through synchronous and asynchronous learning, attending virtual and hands-on training provided by their respective schools at the start of the pandemic, self-learning through watching YouTube video tutorials on navigating different platforms used in online learning, learning from their students through asking different feedbacks on what strategy pertaining to online learning is more effective or not, learning from their children at home who are also working from home, and asking help on different programs/applications that their children are more familiar with, integrating hybrid learning, which is mixed online and modular learning with the students.

This is a big turn for nurses in the academe as they reconfigure their teaching and learning strategies to adapt to the present time of the pandemic and to be able to deliver learning effectively. They've adopted flexible learning, which [Gordon \(2014\)](#) pointed out that it focuses on giving students a choice in pace, place, and mode of students' learning, which can be promoted through appropriate pedagogical practice.

Theme 2: Labyrinthing through the Challenges

The new normal in the education system is the new landscape in delivering teaching-learning strategies. The transition from the usual face-to-face classes to an online learning modality has prompted both the educator and the learner to adjust to a new system of non-face-to-face learning. For older adults in

the academe, this is a huge transition as they are accustomed to the traditional ways of delivering learning instructions.

Subtheme 1: Coursing through struggles and adversities

The pandemic caused major changes in the educational system. [Barron et al. \(2021\)](#) noted that despite the overwhelming consequences of this pandemic, this global crisis has also been an extraordinary time for learning where it was found how adaptable and resilient educational systems, policymakers, teachers, students, and families can be. For older adults who are still in the academe, this poses a big transition in their ways of delivering learning instructions. Keeping up with the advances in technology is a major concern for them, considering that their ways of teaching are different from how they were doing it during the face-to-face time.

Some of the key informants verbalized their experience of difficulties in adapting to the changes brought about by the global pandemic:

"Although I have encountered difficulties, I take it as a challenge because I'm learning." (Participant 4, SS3)

"It's very difficult when being done online. That's what I find very hard in teaching RLE during this time." (Participant 1, SS5)

"It's very hard for me, especially catching up with the online platform. That's one of the stressful moments, especially taking exams online, using Google Classroom, and so on. I'm having a hard time with that." (Participant 3, SS10)

"I am fine with this setup, but I find it difficult sometimes since there are times that I have a lot of questions and queries to ask, so I prefer going to school because I am not comfortable with the current setup; aside from that, in this set-up, I can't get answers quickly" (Participant 6, SS5)

"It's a struggle for both the teachers and students. We even tried to evaluate the students regarding the video activity. Most of them find it very difficult, especially when they don't have the actual materials and patients to practice on. I really feel sorry for my students." (Participant 8, SS6)

Some participants shared their difficulties in keeping up with the use of gadgets in the delivery of learning instructions, with some seeking help from family members who are capable of manipulating technology:

"I am not very techy, so I always ask my daughter to teach me how to do this, and then I avoid using slides in Microsoft PowerPoint as it eats a lot of my time since I do not know how to operate given that my time is very limited." (Participant 5, SS4)

"I am fine with this setup, but I find it difficult sometimes since there are times that I have a lot of questions and queries to ask." (Participant 6, SS5)

"It was timely that I started learning to use the technology even in the basics of it like opening a program, communicating with the students online." (Participant 7, SS21)

"I find it difficult to use new gadgets. I usually depend on my younger members of the team when it comes to using technology. In fact, I have listed the steps on how to connect to the internet and how to manipulate my laptop." (Participant 8, SS3)

"It's a struggle for both the teachers and students. We even tried to evaluate the students regarding the video activity. Most of them find it very difficult, especially when they don't have the actual materials and patience to practice on. I really feel sorry for my students." (Participant 8, SS6)

To keep up, some of the participants realized the importance of orienting oneself with the use of technology and how to be more acquainted with it in response to the alternative learning modality:

"Before, I didn't know how to operate the computer, but now, I can operate it with ease -- creating lessons in Moodle, giving assignments, and more. If you're going to constantly practice these every day, you'd be able to perfect the use of such devices." (Participant 9, SS4)

"I learned that you should be equipped with all other things, that you are not only well-versed with face-to-face instruction, but also with technology present at this time." (Participant 10, SS20)

The use of technology paved its way as a convenient way of delivering instructions during the time of the pandemic. With the limited face-to-face encounter, it caused a shift in the delivery of teaching-learning methodologies among senior faculty members; thus, it prompted them to be adept with the use of technology and keep up with the changing times.

Subtheme 2: Thriving with the teaching and learning during the pandemic

Living up to the demands of the pandemic is a form of adaptation that compels every individual to survive in this pressing time. Thriving during this pandemic shows a sense of resilience among every individual from across the globe. [Barron et al. \(2021\)](#) pointed out two crucial factors that shifted due to the pandemic, namely (1) pedagogical adaptations have proven to be pivotal as the traditional lecturing in-person models do not translate to a remote learning environment, and (2) the pandemic has recalibrated how teachers divide their time between teaching, engaging with students, and administrative tasks. In these changing times of the global pandemic, effective use of technology is one of the key principles to ensure cadres of effective teachers.

Key informants shared how they persisted in learning with the use of technology in their delivery of learning instructions, despite their episodes of giving up. They realized the value of continually learning to be more equipped with the changes in the learning landscape in the present time of the pandemic:

"In this online set-up, at first, I really had difficulty. I was about to surrender, but later, I was able to adjust. It's also better that I have people to whom I can talk. It's like a pastime to me, and I do not think of anything but to fulfill my goal, that is, amidst the pandemic, I can still be able to share my experiences with them." (Participant 1, SS 24)

"I learned more patience and perseverance. That's the most important thing for me. If you have patience with your students, likewise the students are patient also with you." (Participant 2, SS26)

"I have learned to be techy, how to navigate and how to extend your patience adjusting yourself from the old to the new setup" (Participant 6, SS17)

One key informant was very honest enough to inform the students of their limitations with the use of technology in instructional delivery; however, the participant saw it as a learning opportunity for learning:

"At the beginning of my class, I will always tell them my limitations so that they would not be surprised. I am happy that my students help me whenever I am struggling." (Participant 11, SS8)

Indeed, internet connectivity is also a major concern for students and participants. Some participants revealed that to stay connected, they provided their own internet connection by using prepaid internet connection to make sure that they could stay connected throughout the duration of their online teaching-learning activities:

"Our internet connection before was not that strong. I bought my own prepaid connection, which was supposed to be strong, but still could not accommodate our needs." (Participant 12, SS10)

With the possibility of a lesser number of enrollees, the participants were thankful that parents allowed children to enroll with the online learning platform so that they can continually teach, even if there are some limitations.

"Good thing that they still allowed their students to enroll even if online." (Participant 12, SS32)

Subtheme 3: Coping with the changes

Change is inevitable. For older adults in the academe, with their own ways of delivering teaching and learning, they coped up with the arising changes in the educational system as brought about by the pandemic. For educators, the COVID-19 is a quintessential adaptive and transformative challenge, one for which there is no preconfigured playbook that can guide appropriate responses. Instead, education leaders must swiftly design responses with specific contexts in mind as the pandemic runs its course ([Reimers et al., 2020](#)).

Some of the key informants shared how they coped with the changes in their teaching as they experienced it during this challenging time.

"My daily routine has changed now that I am teaching online." (Participant 5, SS 2)

"It's very hard, it's hard to catch up. But now, I am slowly catching up, and I know more now, so I have already adjusted. I realized that you can really adjust with this set-up." (Participant 3, SS 14)

"I like it somehow because in this way I can get rid of the boredom. I am also happy with my class schedule." (Participant 5, SS 5)

"Well, there is not much in the preparation, like you just prepare for an hour before class. Thus, you can have your daily bath, breakfast, and make-up then you'll be ready since, on the night before, you already have reviewed your slides. Basically, that's my routine." (Participant 4, SS 12)

With the pandemic affecting the delivery of teaching, some of the key informants realized the change in their purpose of the teaching despite the difficulty encountered. Moreover, they learned how much they have changed for the better:

"If God still provides us wisdom, I will still continue, since we cannot really predict and tell." (Participant 2, SS 21)

"As long as I can still do it, I will do it. But when my body no longer permits, I would quit. I have loved my work, with that passion for teaching, that's why I'm still here." (Participant 3, SS 23)

"As it has become the new normal, I would say that as long as my services would be needed and my body permits since my institution is a friendly school who would hire senior citizens who are still productive, I will still continue" (Participant 7, SS 30)

"I've learned how to adapt to the modern world because of the online platform. I finally learned how to use new gadgets. I realized that it's only difficult at first when I connect my device online, but once I start my lecture, it's enjoyable." (Participant 8, SS 16)

One key informant with co-morbidities and other health concerns was able to cope with teaching despite the implementation of the online platform.

"If I can still make it physically, even with my co-morbidities, I still plan to continue teaching! I feel weak whenever I don't work and teach, especially since I'm very talkative." (Participant 10, SS 12)

Change is a constant, and it will always be a part of our day-to-day activities. It is not about the age of a person; rather, it's the dedication to keep learning and keep up despite all the changes. There are those senior faculty who have been accustomed to their own ways of delivering instruction; however, there are some who are more eager enough to be trained with the changes that have transpired. Considering their health is at a later age, they managed to cope with the changes and proved how dedicated they are to the profession they have been serving for the longest time.

Theme 3: Strengthening Health, Adhering to Protocols

Since the initial outbreak last December 2019, many have faced the risk of contracting the virus through contact with infected individuals or contaminated sources (Atay & Cura, 2020). With this, health and safety protocols are put in place to maintain a high level of safety. There is the strict enforcement of the wearing of PPEs, practicing physical distancing to at least 1 meter apart, the campaign for vaccination, and all other health protocols are being observed.

With the health protocols now in place in response to the threat of the pandemic, some of the informants stated that the shift had led them to be in online classes since physical reporting in class is impossible:

"We don't have physical hospital duty; we just do them online. We also avoid our students to be exposed and infected with the virus." (Participant 2, SS 12)

"Ever since the pandemic started, I have never physically encountered my co-faculty members, students." (Participant 10, SS 8)

Some of the participants shared that with the health protocols, they manage their day-to-day activities with some adjustments being observed:

"Although we follow health protocols, we cannot deny that sometimes we tend to remove our masks." (Participant 2, SS 25)

"We take precautions, of course. I got my full vaccination also." (Participant 7, SS 33)

"I always tell my secretary to always wear a mask and face shield. We don't eat our snacks together, so we just eat at home. We adjusted!" (Participant 9, SS 15)

In the advent of university closure caused by the pandemic, precautionary intervention became one of the most significant as it helped a lot in controlling social interaction within the community, thereby decreasing the number of cases within localities (Tatapudi & Das, 2021). As for safety measures, especially among young students and older adult educators, health protocols must be considered and should be dealt with seriously. Despite the struggles brought forth by virtual classes, both learners and educators must comply with the government health protocols, making everyone continuously become adaptive and adjusted to the digital learning strategy.

Theme 4: Moving Forward with the New Normal

Brennan et al. (2021) purported that there is a widespread recognition that post-pandemic education will involve more arrangements that draw on digital modes of access and delivery. Learning institutions are already re-calibrating their educational system in how to move beyond full-time, in-residence students as the norm to offering online and part-time alternatives for a more diverse range of students. Some, but not all, school systems are heading in this direction. As a way of moving forward with the new normal, these changes are to be assimilated into the educational system of the present time. According to Pogoy and Cutamora (2021), adapting to change while living in the new normal is essential not only in the academe but also in the clinical nursing practice.

Subtheme 1: Adapting to be technologically resilient

Most key informants reported that they are technologically adept. With the global pandemic occurring, it prodded them to become experts technologically and eventually become savvy with the constant use of technology in the delivery of learning instructions. Becoming technologically resilient arises from the demand of the present time.

"I have learned to be techy, how to navigate and to extend patience adjusting yourself from the old to the new setup" (Participant 6, SS 17)

"The mantra in teaching during the pandemic is adaptive learning. Adaptive in the design and adaptive in delivery." (Participant 7, SS 37)

"Unlike before, I don't know how to operate the computer, I only ask my secretary to turn that on for me, but now, almost all the time, from morning until nighttime, I use my gadgets. I learned to multi-task like using the laptop and cellphone, listening to webinars and lectures, and replying to several messages." (Participant 9, SS 23)

"You should be equipped with all other things, not only well-versed with face-to-face instruction, but also with technology present at this time." (Participant 10, SS 20)

Like any other life circumstances, consequences are bound to happen, and there is no other way but to move forward. The pandemic that struck the entire world caused a standstill for all lives affecting so many people. Technology became a trusted ally to these senior faculty, which helped

them must the inconvenience that this pandemic has brought to the delivery of instruction in the present.

Subtheme 2: Having a positive outlook

Beyond the adaptability required for changing conditions and instructional platforms, the role educators assumed required adaptation, as brought about by the constant change and expectations of the pandemic (Mecham et al., 2021). Despite the changes that transpired, the challenges experienced by some educators have led them to become more positive with their outlook on life. With the cessation of the face-to-face class, some are still hopeful of resuming what a normal way of delivering learning instructions was.

Although faced with so many adversities, most if not all the informants are very much optimistic that this phase in education will come to an end. Some of them shared their optimism:

"What I look forward to is for the pandemic to end. I still prefer face-to-face classes, which I think is better than online since we have a real interaction with the former." (Participant 1, SS 29)

"My insight is that although it is very hard to learn in an online set-up if you develop the positivity of being a learner, you will really learn. I think the attitude is one of the important factors in learning the online set-up in this pandemic on the part of the teacher. Courage, positive attitude, and compassion will always accompany you in teaching. The learning process is quite feasible and satisfying as well." (Participant 4, SS 26)

Some of the participants shared how much they've adjusted to this kind of set-up of learning instructions and that this is not a hindrance to learning to continue:

"I am slowly catching up; I know more now, so I have adjusted. I realized that you can really adjust with this set-up." (Participant 3, SS 14)

"I've realized that even though it is online, education continues. Learning never stops." (Participant 5, SS 15)

"It can no longer be back, so let's just look forward. Thus, whatever we have in the present, we just need to adapt, improve, and go for it." (Participant 12, SS 36)

Looking into the informant's experiences, they are keen enough that there will be an end to all these mishaps. At some point, it made them worried about how things will be carried out, yet eventually, they realized that this was just a phase in the educational system. Therefore, they are optimistic that the situation will become better in the coming days.

Discussion

With the pandemic, one most affected sector is academe. In the context of this study, there was a drastic shift from the traditional face-to-face classes to the utilization of virtual platforms (Litvina and Temkina (2021), which has become the academe's alternative management system of continuously providing quality education amidst the pandemic (Flores & Swennen, 2020). All informants were not familiar with distance/online education prior and were not used to technology-driven instructional delivery. Everyone in the

academic profession was affected, not only the students but most especially the older adults teaching in the academe amidst the surge of cases in their very own locality. These older adults have their own share of experiences and stories about why they are still in the profession despite the situation.

Diversifying teaching and learning strategies have been most of our older adult's alternative means to deliver quality education to their students. Older adults learned how to modify teaching and learning modalities to the extent of adapting to the new generation's way of using technology to communicate and connect effectively. As a nurse by heart and a teacher by profession, the experience poses a big turn of events in their teaching career, most especially for those who love the clinical or related learning experience. The diverse strategies in handling student nurses' skills have been challenged greatly.

For older adult nurses in the academe, *labyrinthing through the challenges* is a huge transition as they are accustomed to the traditional ways of delivering learning instructions. Some experience the struggles of adapting to the use of other learning modalities like technology. Others shared their inability to keep up with it, while some denied the opportunity of learning. There were also those who verbalized motivation to help students. As cited by Garcia et al. (2018), some Filipino nurses opted to stay in their workplace due to various reasons like their strong-willed motivation despite the many challenges they may have faced. On the other hand, others strive their best to learn and become accustomed to the new normal. Since this pandemic has been lasting longer than we expected it to end, the older adults will endure and just cope with the limitations, challenges, and changes brought forth by this COVID-19 pandemic.

Strengthening health, adhering to protocols has been instituted by the World Health Organization to keep everyone safe and avoid the spread of this deadly virus. As an older adult who is very vulnerable to acquiring this disease, the measure established by their respective institution has been beneficial to their advantage. In the current situation, taking measures to protect oneself is a must. This is highly important among students and these older adults in the academe.

Moving forward with the new normal must be the outlook of each of the older adults. With the effect of this pandemic, everyone is expected to adapt to this life-changing situation. The teaching and learning system of education is now evolving into technology; thus, older adults employed in the academe must also learn the new normal and should advance to the generation of technical savvies. Even with the hope of returning to the traditional face-to-face, these older adults develop the attitude of resilience and being adapted to the new normal.

Implications for Nursing Education

Colleges of nursing across the Philippines and globally have now adapted the use of hybrid learning since the start of the pandemic. With the drastic shift to more technologically driven curriculum delivery, it is more beneficial for educators to be trained in this kind of teaching-learning reframing. Thus, regardless of age, these strategies would help our educators be empowered to boost their self-confidence in continuing their passion for teaching even if challenges arise. One major benefit would be allowing the older adults to participate in this shift from traditional classroom setup to online teaching. This

would enable them to transcend from their usual teaching methods to a more vigorous and complicated manner with the use of technology, which would challenge them to adapt to the constantly changing environment. In addition, this study could be a sound basis for administrators to plan for their faculty development more strategically and hence can greatly assist and capacitate our educators and address their difficulties. This could surely help sustain the quality of instructional delivery in nursing globally. One limitation of the study is that all informants are Filipino academicians who were not used to having distance education delivery prior to the pandemic.

Conclusion

It can be gleaned that older adults still working in the academe amidst the pandemic are like any other professionals who were greatly affected by the situation. With the nature of their work and their long years of experience providing quality education among student nurses, they also encountered many challenges when the pandemic started. However, despite the many struggles they faced, especially in dealing with the major setback in the educational system, they hurdle the major shift of the educational system from the traditional face-to-face to the online modalities with resiliency. Furthermore, they ensured that they would not become a burden to the academe by being adaptive to the new system. Finally, these older adults still pursue the desire to remain in their profession amidst this pandemic due to their varying personal reasons like love for teaching, avoidance of boredom and stress, and financial matters. For them, catching up and moving forward is the best way to adapt to what we call the new normal.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

No conflicts of interest.

Funding

Funded by the Research Institute of Ageing and Health (RIAH) of Cebu Normal University, Philippines.

Acknowledgment

Sincere thanks to the Research Institute of Ageing and Health (RIAH) of Cebu Normal University for funding this study.

Authors' Contributions

All authors had significant contributions during the conceptualization of the topic, the purpose of study, formulation and finalization of the methodology and design, data collation, analysis, and interpretation of the findings. All authors coordinated with the research assistants after the comments of the technical reviewers of the institute and active participation during revisions of the content. All authors were also active participants in the finalization of the paper for publication and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work (accuracy and integrity). JCC took charge of the similarity index feedbacking and served as the corresponding author.

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Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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- Cite this article as:** Tipon, L. G., Alforque, J. M. L., & Cutamora, J. C. (2022). Lived experiences of older adults while working in the academe amidst the COVID-19 pandemic: The Philippine context. *Belitung Nursing Journal*, 8(3), 235-244. <https://doi.org/10.33546/bnj.2098>