Lived Experiences of Teacher-Writers during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT	Published Online: June 19, 2024

During the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher-writers were at the forefront of developing instructional materials that became in demand by both teachers and learners. The instructional materials produced by the teacher-writers served as major learning tools for remediation, enhancement, and mastery of specific learning competencies. An interpretive phenomenological approach was used to examine the lived experiences of these teacher-writers in the province of Sorsogon for the school years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. It also analyzed the crafting and coping mechanisms faced by the teacher-writers during the pandemic. The data were gathered through a structured interview with seven elementary teacher-writers in the province of Sorsogon. The informants' responses were transcribed verbatim, translated, and analyzed using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach. Findings revealed that elementary teacher-writers were adjusting throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the development of instructional materials, insufficient experience, inadequate training, and a scarcity of resources pose significant challenges for most teacher-writers. However, despite their experiences, teacher-writers have shown optimism to continue as teacher-writers even after the pandemic. As a result, the researchers identified coping mechanisms to help teacher-writers navigate their writing journey beyond the pandemic.

KEYWORDS:
coping mechanisms, COVID-19 pandemic, instructional materials, lived experience, teacher-writer

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic had brought great effects on people's lives. World economies, public health and safety, and educational systems were hit around the world. Responding to the pressing situation, the rest of the world has implemented its preparations for the transition from traditional to digital learning facilities (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020; Mulenga & Marban, 2020).

In the Philippines alone, the crisis translates into almost half a million infections and more than 5,000 deaths (Worldometer, 2020). This issue resulted in the closure and shutdown of all educational institutes, including higher education, and 27.2 million of the world's student population. (Allego, 2020). Transitioning to and implementing the new teaching and learning format has created numerous problems, risks, and challenges for teachers and students (Cachón-Zagalaz, Sanchez-Zafra, Sanabrias-Moreno, Gonzales-Valero, & Lara-Sanchez 2020; Bao, 2020; & Hiraoka & Tomoda, 2020). The teaching and learning process has met

unpredictable issues and difficulties of varying stages and aspects, including the financial, mental, and health drain on coping with the new trend in the educational system while the pandemic is presently spreading the continuity of learning. Prioritizing the well-being and safety amidst the pandemic, the government created the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) to implement the strict monitoring and prevention of the continuous spread of the COVID-19 virus, as well as to exercise the recommendations of the issuance of an executive order by its members, including the Department of Education (DepED).

The imposing pronouncement of the DepEd Secretary Briones along with the Department of Education's Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (DepEd BE-LCP) included a package of interventions that will respond to basic education challenges brought about by COVID-19. These provide various options for the learning delivery best suited to the demographic, economic, and the learner's present situation (DepEd, 2020a). Based on the Learning Enrolment and Survey Form (LESF) results, modular remote learning is the most chosen learning modality for most parents or guardians in the basic education sector.

Modular learning involves individualized instruction that lets learners use Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) in print or digital format; whichever is applicable in the context of the learner, and other learning resources such as learner's materials, textbooks, activity sheets, and study guides (DepEd, 2020b). This is significantly used as material to facilitate the implementation of the distance learning modality. The adaptation of the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELC) becomes vital to the crafting or development of learning resources or instructional materials and ensures their delivery to different platforms. The intervention package prioritized the safety and well-being of the teachers, learners, and others concerned. Meanwhile, DepEd Sec. Briones, as reported by Hernando-Malipot (2020), reiterated that "the SLMs and the other alternative learning delivery modalities are in place to address the needs, situations, and resources of each learner and will cover all the bases in ensuring that basic education will be accessible amid the present crisis posed by COVID-19". This requires the participation of the basic education teachers in instructional materials or module writing for blended learning. Furthermore, the guidelines for the provision of learning resources in the implementation of a basic education learning continuity plan (DepEd, 2020b) and the provision of learning resources for the 3rd and 4th quarters of the school year 2020-2021 mandate teacher-writers to develop instructional materials for the distance learning modality (DepEd RO 5, 2020b), resulting in the creation of learning activity sheets in the field.

Integrating SLMs with alternative learning delivery modalities helped DepEd ensure that all learners had access to quality basic education during SY 2020-2021, with face-to-face classes still prohibited due to the public health situation. These instructional materials were used in the various forms of distance learning modalities, such as modular distance learning modality (MDL), online distance learning modality (ODL), and TV-based instruction/radio-based instruction, or TVI/RBI (DepEd, 2020a).

Considering the mandated provision of the learning package to be self-guided and must be comprehensible by the learners without teacher supervision, both the learners and the parents felt uneasiness and hardship. This is also reflected more so by the teachers, who must produce IMs based on the level of their learners, whom they did not meet in person. Since and because learners' performances and quality education matter, research on analyzing the lived experiences of the teacher-writers of instructional materials is needed.

Accordingly, based on the given data presented, there is a need to examine the lived experiences of the teacher-writers during the COVID-19 pandemic, not only to ensure the quality of the IMs that the teacher-writer may produce but also to explore the writers' aspects, personal and professional, during the pandemic. This study desired to understand the experiences of the IM writers as they are bound to do the writing with the standards, considering the age, backgrounds, and professional competence of the teacher-writers, as well as their impact on the learners' motivation to accomplish the given learning materials and the teaching and learning process, without so much knowledge, proper training, and proper information dissemination on how to do the task in accordance with the proper guidelines based on legal bases. Hence, this study aims to understand the lived experiences of teacher-writers from the DepEd Province of Sorsogon in the school years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study investigates the experiences of Filipino teacher-writers during the pandemic, specifically focusing on their role in creating instructional materials (IMs) for remote learning. This study employs a multi-theoretical lens to understand the challenges and adaptations they encountered.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT) provides a foundational framework. SCT emphasizes the importance of social interaction and guidance from a "More Knowledgeable Other" (MKO) for learning (Daniels, 1996). However, pandemic restrictions likely hindered opportunities for in-person classroom observations and collaboration with colleagues, potentially limiting access to crucial MKO support. This lack of social interaction could have significantly impacted teacher-writers ability to develop effective IMs tailored to student needs.

Likewise, Bandura's Social Learning Theory offers a complementary perspective. This theory suggests that individuals can learn by observing and observing the behaviors of others (Crain, 2015). In the context of the pandemic, teacher-writers might have learned from colleagues with prior IM development experience or perhaps gleaned insights from online resources despite limited pre-pandemic training. This alternative form of social learning could have played a significant role in equipping them with the necessary skills for IM creation.

Moreover, Siemens and Downes' Connectivism Theory adds a layer of technological influence. According to Goldie (2016), this theory highlights the importance of technology in facilitating learning by enabling connections between information sources. While internet access may have been limited for some, those with connectivity could have leveraged technology to locate resources, collaborate with colleagues, and remain updated on the best practices for developing effective remote learning IMs.
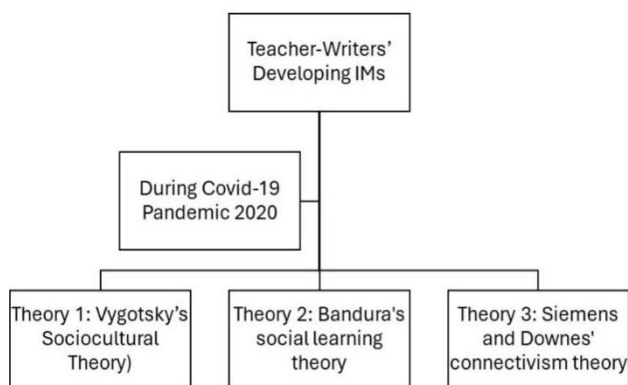
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Figure 1. Theoretical Paradigm

By examining these three learning theories, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Filipino teacher-writers navigated the challenges and opportunities of creating IMs in this unique and demanding situation. The findings can inform future training programs and support structures to empower educators to develop effective instructional materials for diverse learning environments.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Research Design

The research design employed for this study is a phenomenological approach to studying the lived experiences of instructional material teacher-writers in the Sorsogon division during the pandemic. Particularly the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA). IPA is an inductive research method that begins with specific examples and utilizes them to create broader theories (Delve et al., 2023). This type of research methodology tries to explain the nature of things by the way people experience them. The research design was selected.

The Informants

The primary participants are the seven teacher-writers who crafted their instructional materials during the height of the pandemic. The selection was primarily based on the following criteria: the teacher must have developed instructional materials during the pandemic; the teacher must submit the validated instructional materials in the division office by the Learning Resource Management Division Section (LRMDS) Chief; and an elementary school teacher. Thus, the selected participants were the only recognized teacher-writers who adhered to the established criteria within the timeline by the Division office. The seven participants had committed their willingness and full cooperation to the study. In terms of confidentiality, informants were informed that their true names would not be disclosed in the paper, and pseudonyms were used instead to preserve their anonymity.

The profile of the informants revealed a concentration of participants within the 36-40 age group. The informants included a higher proportion of male teacher-writers, while marital status did not appear to be a significant factor in participation. All participants held relevant teaching qualifications, with a mix of highly proficient and proficient experience levels based on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) framework. Notably, the length of teaching experience varied considerably, ranging from 1 to 36 years.

The Instrument

The main instrument used in data gathering is the researcher-made questionnaire composed of 15 items, guided by the adviser and dissertation committee. This instrument was pilot-tested on the secondary school teacher informant and proven to be suitable for the study. This instrument was used for the conduct of the face-to-face structured interview with the selected informants. Follow-up questions were appended as needed to encourage elaboration and clarify responses.

Data Collection Procedure

Before the conduct of the interview, the researcher sought permission from the informants for their participation and scheduled the face-to-face interview at their most convenient time. After permissions had been sought, the researcher traveled to four municipalities of Sorsogon to locate and interview the seven informants. In-depth interviews were conducted with informants from various demographic locations using a structured interview guide.

Data Analysis Procedure

The responses of the informants were transcribed verbatim, translated, and analyzed using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), the analysis for the IPA includes multiple readings and note-taking, transforming notes into themes, and seeking relationships and clustering themes. In interpreting and coding these themes, the researcher found patterns of meaning across all participants, ultimately leading to the creation of superordinate themes that represent the overall understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
A. Lived Experiences of Instructional Material of the Teacher-Writers During the Pandemic.

The teachers are considered frontline persons for they displayed extra courage and resiliency in delivering basic education during the pandemic, (Ledesma,2021) and, because their work-related duties are performed onsite, and job responsibilities involve being in proximity of less than six feet from the public or their co-workers (Center for Disease Control, 2021). These frontline workers were called upon to continue providing services to the public despite exposure to negative psychological and emotional experiences while on the frontlines of the pandemic (Baloran, 2020). The analysis of teacher-writer's responses during the pandemic revealed two primary themes with emergent subthemes.

1. **Challenges of creating IMs during the pandemic**

The education system and the educators have adopted "Education in Emergency" through various online platforms and are compelled to adopt a system that they are not prepared for, (Pokhrel, & Chhetri, 2021) even though schools are not yet ready to implement distance learning (Asio & Bayuca, 2021), and as the teachers' pedagogical skills do not cater to the new teaching environment, nor have they been trained for these kinds of situations, (Jain, Lall, & Singh, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic turned the educational system from being learner-centric to one-way teacher-centric provision (Jain & Signh, 2021). The global pandemic caused a significant challenge to educators worldwide, requiring them to adapt their teaching methods to a remote learning environment. This drastic shift created a unique set of difficulties for teachers in creating instructional materials.

   1.1. Limitations due to pandemic restrictions

The field of education has experienced a period of profound transformation in recent years. The global pandemic, with its associated restrictions and safety protocols, necessitated a significant shift from traditional pedagogical approaches. The development of instructional materials (IMs) was a major concern. For educators accustomed to well-established methods, crafting engaging, and effective IMs suddenly presented a complex challenge.

DepEd Order 14 series of 2020 or the Guidelines on the Required Health Standards in Basic Education Offices and Schools was issued as a response to the danger of face-to-face classes despite the pandemic. Aside from the challenges of the limited classes, teacher-writers were also challenged to do the tasks related to crafting IMs such as demonstrating to students, especially to the younger pupils. Teacher-writer 1 (TW1) stated: *Bawal paluwason ang mga bata ko na kindergarten at the same time sinakit ako sa pagsarit sa barangay para makademo.* [My kindergarten pupils were prohibited from going out and at the same time, I struggled with requesting permission from the barangay officials to conduct my demonstration]. TW 1, faced a double obstacle: movement restrictions hindering in-person classroom observations and the additional challenge of obtaining permission from barangay officials to conduct demonstrations with students. The status of implementation of the Kindergarten Program during the pandemic is highly observed following the proper strict observance of health protocols in the province of Sorsogon. Similarly, regular conduct monitoring of learners is highly observed (Mostera & Digo, 2023).

What TW 1 experienced in movement restrictions not only prevented him from conducting in-person classroom observations but also made it difficult to pilot test materials, particularly those requiring demonstrations or hands-on activities often crucial for kindergarten students. Since his students are younger children, stricter implementation of the health protocol in the local community limits movement or gatherings, including those related to educational purposes.

Additionally, TW 6 was concerned with the process for the revision of IMs to the division office: *Deri ko naexpect na irog sadto kaawat an approval sa Division Office sa IM, siguro ko dahil nasa skeletal work force sira.* (I did not expect the delay on the approval of my IM at the Division Office…probably because they are on the skeletal workforce.) Like the Informants, TW 5 also saw potential limitations in the workforce in the division office because of the unexpected delay of his IM. TW 6 likely anticipated a quicker turnaround on IM revisions due to the urgent need for new instructional materials during the transition to remote learning. However, the delay caused by the skeletal workforce at the Division Office demonstrates how established procedures may not adapt as quickly as the situation requires.

Moreover, he was also uncertain about his lack of relevant training in developing IMs: "*Panu wara man talaga ako maski nanu na training.* [I lack any kind of training]. This concern causes his responses to reflect his anxiety with the delivery of the IMs to the students. *Naisip ko lang, panu nira maaraman an inhatag ko na IMs. What if wara makadanun kanira?Panu ko na baga ko-contextualize an activity sheets san mga Grade 2 pupils ko?* (I was just thinking, how could they know and learn on my distributed IMs? What if there was no one to teach them at home? How am I going to contextualize my activity sheets for my Grade 2 pupils?)

Initially, the mandate on the creation of modules for the implementation of blended/distance learning is directly opposed and disapproved for the crafting should be done by the "specialists" from DepEd (Teachers Dignity Coalition, 2020). To lighten the disapproval issue, the DepEd emphasized that the teachers are not being forced to create modules for their learners, but as the first close contact in the field, teachers should consider this as a "specialized kind of activity" that requires training (Briones, 2020). Meanwhile, the module writers of the DepEd were rushed and blamed for the erroneous entries found in the learners' modules (Nicholls, 2020). Thus, proving that the inexperienced resource learning material developers are not well-oriented on how to craft the modules for the learners. Even though there were guidelines released by the DepEd, there was a deficiency in orienting the teachers on how to develop the modules (Alban & Alieto, 2022).

These restrictions hinder in-person classroom observations (TW 1) and demonstrations with students (TW 1), which are crucial for understanding student needs and gauging the effectiveness of materials. Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of engaging with students in the learning process. Observing students and guiding them through activities facilitates teacher-writers to tailor IMs to the students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The limited workforce at the Division Office (TW 6) restricts access to more experienced colleagues who could provide valuable feedback and guidance on IM development. Vygotsky's MKO concept emphasizes the importance of interacting with

an MKO figure, someone who has greater knowledge and expertise and can assist the learner's development. The delay in receiving feedback from colleagues hinders this crucial interaction and guidance process. Lastly, the teachers' concerns regarding their lack of training in developing IMs (TW 6) highlight the lack of guidance from experts. Vygotsky suggests that learners benefit from the support and knowledge of MKO figures. Without proper training, teacher-writers may struggle to create effective IMs that address the specific needs and learning styles of their students.

1.2. Resource Constraints

Beyond the restrictions of the pandemic, another major factor that made the experiences of teacher-writers during the pandemic more challenging was the constraint on their resources. Informant TW 2 struggled: W*ala po ako printer, bond paper, and ink - kasakit maghanap paprintan that time*. [I don't have a printer, bond paper, and ink, it is very difficult to find a printing service at that time.] Since the crafting of IMs needs printing of materials, they stressed that their major concern was finding services that would accommodate them. This scarcity significantly hampered their ability to produce physical copies of the IMs, a crucial step in the development process.

As the country is composed of islands and islets, with limited to no internet connectivity to the majority of places, and due to the result of DepEd's National Learner Enrolment and Survey Forms (LESF) the modular learning modality has been considered an option by most of the public schools in the Philippines. The preferred option indicated in the LESF reveals the need to intensify the crafting of instructional materials for the teacher-writers because of the large portion of learners who are asking for and needing it.

Similarly, TW 3, experienced internet connectivity concerns during his writing. She stated: *Wara kami internet sa balay and pagnagsusulod ka sa amu madulom kaya naghuhudam ako gate pass..nan nagkakadto ako sa skul para didto maghimu san ako IMs*. (We don't have internet connections at home. and once you entered our house. It is dark. So, I used to borrow a gate pass and went to school to do my IMs there.). His strains with internet connectivity and lack of dedicated workspace in their home affected his productivity.

Numerous issues have been reported that teachers may not necessarily have the technologies, resources, and competencies that they need to engage and succeed in this new modality of teaching and crafting Ims (Moralista & Oducado, 2020). It has been revealed that 81% of the educators who were respondents to the study are putting in more than 14 hours a day to finish their professional responsibilities (Schaffhauser, 2020).

Teacher-writers were given the additional duty to create IMs amidst their main challenges in terms of learning quality transfer, module distribution and retrieval, students' difficulties in following instructions, power disruption, internet connection, and health risks posed by the pandemic (Agayon et al., 2022). In the locality where the teacher-writers are located, these discrepancies were verified by teachers who expressed a need for improvement in various areas like instructional design, technology use, curriculum development, and assessment (Reantaso & Digo, 2022).

Despite the limited resources, teachers such as TW4 utilized alternative strategies using books and lesson plans to gather information (similar to learning from colleagues' experiences). This is centered on Bandura's concept of observational learning, where individuals can learn by observing and imitating the behaviors of others, even if they are directly involved in available resources. Moreover, while internet access was limited for some (TW 3), those who had it (TW 4) utilized it for research (connecting to online resources). This aligns with Connectivism's focus on technology-facilitated learning and the importance of creating connections between information sources. However, limited connectivity highlights the challenges of equitable access to technology.

2. Teacher response to challenges

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the teacher-writers demonstrated exceptional skill and perseverance in creating instructional materials.

2.1. Adapting research strategies

Due to the restrictions imposed during the pandemic, various protocols implemented hinder the teacher-writers from developing IMs using the internet. However, to accomplish the task, they explored alternative traditional strategies to gather information and develop effective IMs. One such example is the case of TW 4. *Nahirapan ako magresearch na walang internet, which is madali sana, nag-research nalang ako sa mga libro and lesson plans*. [I had difficulty conducting my research due to lack of internet connectivity… I opted to research from books and lesson plans instead]. She recognized the need to adapt to traditional methods of gathering data from readily available sources such as textbooks and existing lesson plans.

However, TW 4, improvised what she lacked in resources as she reiterated her experience of using the public WiFi in their community even at ungodly hours. *Dati an mga ingagamit ko puro online research, nya saka kay wara internet. So, nagkonek ako sa PISO WIFI san amu kapitbahay, pero medyo harayu ini isa amu balay. Kaya usually yadto ako maski gabi na, didto ko intatrabaho an ako IM kaya masasabi ko na labor with love and sacrifice yun*. (I usually used online research then, but unfortunately, there was no internet connection. So, what I did was to connect to the PISO WIFI of our neighbor but it is not that near to my house so usually, I am still there even though it is late at night already. I work with my IMs there, that is why it is considered as labor with love and sacrifices.) Her likely preference for readily available articles online led her to access the available internet connection she could find even at night to develop her IMs. This suggests her reliance on online data as her primary source of information. Moreover, her dedication to

work late at night and outside the safety of her abode suggests her commitment to accomplish the task.

Despite limitations imposed by the pandemic, teacher-writers like TW 4 demonstrated remarkable resilience in crafting IMs. While restricted internet access hindered their preferred online research methods, TW 4's story exemplifies a blend of learning theories that illustrate how educators adapted. Her utilization of alternative resources like textbooks and lesson plans aligns with Self-Directed Learning (SDL), where she took initiative and autonomy to find knowledge despite limitations. This self-directed approach is further emphasized by her dedication, evident in her late-night work sessions and venturing out for Wi-Fi access. This perseverance aligns with the importance of motivation in SDL. Beyond these core elements, TW 4's resourcefulness in leveraging available materials and creatively seeking alternative internet access highlights her adaptability. This showcases characteristics often associated with Social Learning Theory where individuals can learn by observing and imitating resourceful behaviors, even if indirectly. Furthermore, TW 4's willingness to utilize alternative resources suggests a lifelong learner mindset, a hallmark of effective educators.

However, TW 4's experience also underscores the need for a multi-pronged approach to support teacher-writers. Providing training in diverse research methods and equipping teachers with skills to utilize various information sources (both online and offline) would enhance their SDL capabilities. Additionally, investing in training beyond online resources and addressing the digital divide through equitable access to technology and the Internet for all educators would further empower them. Finally, fostering a culture of resource sharing through online platforms or physical resource centers would encourage collaboration and leverage the collective knowledge and skills of the teaching community. By acknowledging and supporting teacher resourcefulness, coupled with fostering self-directed learning and addressing systemic limitations, we can empower educators to develop effective instructional materials even in challenging circumstances.

2.2. Resourcefulness and collaboration

Seeking support and expertise from more experienced teachers to overcome limitations suggests a collaborative environment for teacher-writers. Both TW 7 and TW 4 expressed their gratitude to their fellow teachers for giving technical assistance. TW 7 expressed: *Nagcollaborate ang mga master teachers para madanunan ako.* [The master teachers collaborated to help me].

In the meantime, informant TW 7 finds it challenging in terms of financial aspects. Informant TW 7 commented: *An pinakamasakit para sa ako an sa pinansyal aspect may mga times na naghuhudam ako para sa ako IMS.* (I get that hard on the financial aspect…there are times when I used to borrow (money) for that (IM crafting). As schools might not provide adequate financial resources to cover all the costs

associated with IM development, teachers might incur personal expenses for resources or tools needed to develop IMs, especially when internet access is limited, and traditional materials require purchase.

Another informant TW 6 narrated his experience of using in his writing the stories he had heard while listening to the noise in their area. *Maribukon an lugar namu maski pandemic pero minsan an mga ribok nan iristoryahan nira na nababati ko inbubutang ko sa ako IM.* (My place is noisy even though it is pandemic but sometimes that noise and conversations that I have heard I use on my IM). TW 6 demonstrates resourcefulness in utilizing readily available stimuli. This approach suggests several potential benefits, including increased student participation through familiar elements and the promotion of cultural awareness by reflecting local narratives. However, it is essential to consider potential challenges such as content appropriateness, privacy concerns, and verifying the accuracy of information obtained from overheard conversations. Overall, TW 6's experience showcases an innovative approach that can enhance IMs with local context but also emphasizes the need for careful consideration of potential issues.

Another response of TW 7 stated the need to deliver basic education amidst the pandemic through IMs while needing somebody to give technical assistance, he utilized the messenger as the medium of communication. *Messenger panu mao an mas familiar sako nan maski san mga kauropod ko na nangdadanun sa ako sa teknikal, in explore ko yun calls, chats, text messages, mao yun an inhimu ko, an mga seniors bawal pati magruluwas pero so far naging maayos man baya an video calls and voice messages na inconsider namu na option din.* (Messenger because that is what I am familiar with and even with my colleagues who will help me with the technical assistance. I explored it, calls, chats, text messages, that is what I do. Even if senior citizens are prohibited from going out, so far it has gone well - video calls and voice messages are considered as an option too...)

Demonstrating resourcefulness, TW 7 explored various communication options within Messenger, including calls, chats, and text messages. While limitations on movement for senior teachers presented a hurdle, TW 7 highlights a positive outcome, suggesting they successfully adapted by utilizing alternative methods like video calls and voice messages. This experience exemplifies the teacher-writers ability to leverage existing technology and find creative solutions to ensure continued collaboration despite the challenges of the pandemic. The shift in the education system strengthens the call for the crafting and development of instructional materials to be distributed at home. The Department of Education (DepEd) maintains creating modules for blended learning is a "collective effort" that requires participation from teachers who will be using these in the upcoming school year (Hernando-Malipot, 2020).

In battling the pandemic with the development of instructional materials, teacher developers discovered the effect of a collaborative effort of teachers. A considerable

amount of research evidence suggests that collaboration between general and special education teachers is a pillar of effective teaching for all students, including those with learning difficulties wherein the most initial findings of the co-teaching model were replaced with the parallel co-teaching model, where each teacher provides instruction and the team teaching for the benefit of the students (Plauborg, 2009). Indicating this, a school's success is shown through the collaboration done by the teachers (Tzivinikou, 2015). Additionally, amidst the challenges being faced, being with someone in tune helps to keep a positive outlook, and inspires the teacher writer to continue developing the instructional materials even with the health crisis threats (Alban, 2022).

The limitations imposed by the pandemic likely constrained opportunities for in-person collaboration, potentially hindering access to crucial support from more experienced colleagues, a key tenet of SCT. However, teacher-writers like TW 7 effectively leveraged alternative communication methods like messaging platforms (e.g., Messenger) to bridge this gap. This highlights their ability to adapt SCT principles by fostering a virtual "community of practice" for technical assistance and knowledge sharing, even amidst physical distancing measures.

On the other hand, teacher-writers like TW 6 demonstrated resourcefulness by incorporating readily available environmental stimuli (overheard stories) into their IMs. This aligns with Bandura's concept of observational learning, where individuals can learn from their surroundings. However, it is crucial to acknowledge potential limitations associated with this approach, such as ensuring content appropriateness and verifying the accuracy of information gleaned from informal sources. Furthermore, the TW 7 experience underscores the financial challenges faced by some teacher-writers (borrowing money for IM development). While Bandura's theory emphasizes the role of social learning, it also acknowledges that external factors can limit its effectiveness. The financial constraints faced by some teachers highlight the need for additional support systems to ensure equitable access to resources necessary for IM development.

2.3. Motivation and Well-being

Creating IMs during the pandemic undoubtedly took a toll on the teacher's well-being. TW 5 openly shared experiences of his health issues during the writing of his IM. O*ver fatigue ako, nagbawas talaga an ako timbang.* [I am over fatigued, I lost weight.] The immense pressure to develop IMs during the pandemic likely harmed teacher well-being. This is exemplified by TW 1's experience, where they openly shared significant physical strain. This highlights the potential for burnout and the need for support systems to address the well-being of teachers working under such demanding circumstances. This learning resource development proved to have significant findings on the impact of the mental health of the teacher-writers (Jimenez, 2021). Adding to that, teachers' health is jeopardized or threatened (Asbury & Kim, 2020).

However, their perseverance and motivation moved to develop IMs for the learners. TW 5 expressed his mantra while conducting his IM development: *Maskin masakit na, iniisip ko nalang para ini sa mga learners, kaya ko man un taposon.* [Even if it is already hard, I kept on reminding myself that it's for my learners, and I believe I can do it.] This highlights the strong internal motivation that propelled many teachers forward. This dedication and perseverance serve as a testament to the vital role teachers play in ensuring educational continuity, even when facing personal hardships and burnout. Their unwavering commitment to their students shines through despite the challenges of the pandemic.

Despite the challenges, teacher-writers like TW 5 demonstrated remarkable internal motivation. This aligns with Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to complete a task. TW 5's unwavering commitment to his students served as a powerful motivator, even in the aftermath of fatigue and hardship.

B. The Coping mechanism of the instructional Materials Teacher-writers During the Pandemic.

The following subthemes emerged showing the coping mechanisms of the IM teacher-writers during the pandemic.

1. Being a strategic thinker

Overcoming life's challenges, including uncertainties, disappointments, and barriers, is an art. Yet, within these challenges is an amazing tool ready to be used: strategic thinking. Strategic thinking is a dynamic coping strategy that enables people to survive and thrive in the face of adversity. This guide acts as a compass, revealing the power of strategic thinking as an effective technique for navigating life's difficulties. These have been shared to be among the coping mechanisms of the IM teacher-writers during the pandemic. According to TW 2: "*Naging mas innovative ako sa paghimu sin IMs. Biyu, ingamit nan indagdag ko an maga aram ko sa ICT para makatapos lang. Nag attend an ako sin iba iba na mga online training, flipped classrooms type san training and mask isa social media based platforms na mga libre..para makasunod nan makaprovide sin effective IMs.*" [I became innovative during the crafting of my IMs, in a way that I embraced and integrated what I know in ICT to survive. I attended different online training, flipped classroom types of training, and even social media-based platforms for free to follow and be provided with effective IMs.] The teacher-writers demonstrate that strategic thinking can be viewed as a form of network building. By actively seeking new information and collaborating with others (even virtually), they built a stronger and more adaptable learning network. This network allowed them to overcome the limitations posed by the pandemic and create effective IMs.

Being strategic helps, anybody face new stages and situations, especially during this global pandemic. With new platforms for instructing students, like Zoom, Canvas, Google Classroom, etc., teachers learned how to be strategic and plan ways to guarantee meaningful conversations and good learning outputs in a virtual system (Hart, 2020). Though the

utilization of new platforms is not applied in the same way as previously stated, it becomes helpful during the crafting of instructional materials. The passage on strategic thinking positions it as a "dynamic coping strategy." This aligns with the concept of stress management according to Desabayla and Digo (2024a, 2024b). Likewise, by employing strategic thinking skills, the teacher-writers were likely better equipped to manage the stress associated with the pandemic's challenges. Their initiative in exploring online resources, attending training, and collaborating creatively demonstrates how strategic thinking can be a valuable tool for navigating stressful situations and achieving goals.

The passage on strategic thinking echoes the Connectivism theory, particularly in the context of the teacher-writers pandemic struggles. Both emphasize navigating obstacles through connections. The limitations imposed by the pandemic disrupted the teacher-writers' usual learning networks, hindering collaboration. However, their strategic thinking shone through their exploration of alternative resources and virtual collaboration tools. This aligns with Connectivism's core principle, where knowledge is built through connections within a network. By actively seeking new connections and utilizing existing knowledge, the teacher-writers successfully navigated the dreadful learning landscape and achieved their goal of creating effective IMs.

2. Requesting assistance

Asking for assistance is not a sign of weakness but a symbolic representation of an individual asking for humility. This act of humility symbolizes being teachable, which is especially suited to the line of the teaching profession. This greatly helped teacher-writers to cope with the challenges they faced in crafting instructional materials. TW 1, admittedly said: *"Nagpatukdo ako sa ako mga karamaghud kay mga teachers man, bago lang panu ako paghimu IMs."* [I was mentored by my siblings because they are teachers too, I am a newbie in IMs writing]

Interestingly, a study on secondary school heads in the Philippines (Desabayla and Digo, 2024a, 2024b) found that collaboration was one of the stress management techniques employed by these leaders. This aligns with the concept of strategic thinking, which emphasizes building strong networks and seeking support. By collaborating with colleagues, the teacher-writers not only addressed knowledge gaps in IM creation but also potentially built a support system that could help manage the stress associated with the challenges they faced during the pandemic.

According to Ketchell (2018), creating collaborative working conditions reduces educators' stress and helps novice teachers to become effective. Social interaction can lead to knowledge and productivity spillover from trained to untrained workers in collaborative team settings or between senior and junior workers, particularly in low-skilled tasks and occupations (Cornelissen, 2016). Gaining a supportive relationship with co-workers and others is a good strategy to

lessen the negative result of work-related stress (Center for Disease Control, 2020.)

Leveraging expertise through collaboration aligns with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). SCT asserts that learning occurs within the ZPD, the area between a learner's independent capabilities and what they can achieve with assistance. In this context, teacher-writers seek help from colleagues. Their more experienced peers function as the MKO in SCT, offering the guidance and expertise necessary for novice teacher-writers to develop effective IMs and progress beyond their current skill set. This may be made possible and sustainable if these concerns are integrated into their strategic plans (Digo, 2022). These collaborative approaches not only bridge knowledge gaps but also foster a supportive network, potentially mitigating stress associated with research-based instructional materials development during challenging circumstances, even beyond the pandemic.

3. Adjustment

The shift from the traditional way to distance learning modality seemed as if hitting the impossible way of teaching learners which no one had imagined before the pandemic era. Teachers as well as students had a hard time coping with the new learning delivery. However, everybody has to adjust to every circumstance that comes their way bearing in mind that any hardships and difficulties in life are all but passing. Some things are out of anybody's control and all that they can do is to do something to effectively adjust to the situation. T W 4 shared: *"Hindi ako ganun kabihasa sa computer pero alam ko an basic dati kasi tinuruan ako ng anak ko..kaya lang during pandemic nsa manila siya kasi nagwo work na. So ang ginawa ko kun medyo mahirap na at parang di na basic, nanonood ako ng videos on how to do it. At natuto ako dun. At 52, dapat hindi tayo basta nag aanu lang na porke may edad na."* [I am not that expert with the computer but I know some of the basics of it because my son taught me. But he was working in Manila during the pandemic. So, if there are things I need to know, I looked for instructional videos and I learned. We have to adjust regardless of age.]

According to Pertuz and Sebastian (2017), to avoid inappropriate functioning and have a healthy learning community, adjusting to the system is needed. In the new setup, one of the values that emerged silently is initiative. It is because of the adjustment we came up with the initiative and it is because of the initiative that we have been able to pull our education system today.

The unprecedented shift to online learning highlights the importance of the Connectivism theory. TW 4 initially relied on their son for basic computer skills (a previous connection within their learning network), but the pandemic necessitated further adaptation. Despite the limited access to this support, TW 4 demonstrated initiative, a key element in fostering a healthy learning community. They actively created new connections within their network by seeking out instructional

videos online. This self-directed learning approach is aligned with Connectivism's emphasis on navigating an ever-changing knowledge landscape by creating new connections and actively seeking out information to address knowledge gaps.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the revealed findings, teacher-writers faced hurdles due to pandemic limitations, lack of resources, and limited training in crafting IMs. These challenges made it harder to gather information and collaborate traditionally. However, the teacher-writers showed amazing resilience and resourcefulness. They found alternative research methods (books, lesson plans, online resources when possible), embraced collaboration through messaging platforms, and stayed motivated to create IMs for their students.

This study highlights how different learning theories were used: connectivism through building new connections to navigate the changing knowledge landscape, self-directed learning through taking initiative to find resources, social learning theory through seeking help from colleagues and using available stimuli, and sociocultural theory through adapting communication methods for a remote setting.

The following recommendations are made to stand for further recommendation and approval; Propose an output-based training and workshop for IM developers; Formulate standard templates for every instructional material design; Capacitate the school head as an IM technical assistant in the field. To the persons with authority to ensure the standard of consistency in implementation. Lastly, to explore the long-term effects of the pandemic on teacher development and ways to promote well-being in the teaching profession.

VII. DISCLOSURE

We declare that we have no financial or material interests related to the research in this paper that could create a conflict of interest.

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