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Exploring the concept of pedagogical resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic: Teachers' perspectives from Thailand and the Philippines

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This brief research report aimed to explore the concept of pedagogical resilience and how teachers in Thailand and the Philippines build resilience in pedagogy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employing the qualitative research design, the data were obtained from the focus group discussion (FGD) and semi-structured interviews with 12 teachers, 8 of whom were from 1 of the universities in the Philippines and another four teachers from a university in Thailand. The thematic analysis revealed that pedagogical resilience is influenced by teachers' personal, professional, and social attitudes toward teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although teachers acknowledged that they had no experience in remote and online teaching, they demonstrated resiliency by being flexible and adaptive to the situation. Such an attitude allowed them to build a relationship with their colleagues and design teaching and learning pedagogy that addresses the issues in their online and remote teaching. The findings provide a clear understanding of the conceptualization of pedagogical resilience from the perspectives of teachers in the Philippines and Thailand.

KEYWORDS

pedagogical resilience, ASEAN teachers, higher education institutions (HEIs), COVID-19 pandemic, remote teaching and online learning

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly impacted the educational systems worldwide (Raghunathan et al., 2022), where various educational institutions have had to find alternative modalities to continue delivering class instructions. As a result, classes were moved to online, and lessons were delivered remotely, significantly affecting

teachers' pedagogical practices and mental health. Previous studies reported that teachers experienced stress, anxiety, and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic (Aperribai et al., 2020; Jakubowski and Sitko-Dominik, 2021; Santamaría et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2022) since they were unprepared for the sudden transition from face-to-face classroom teaching to remote or online teaching. In a study conducted by Santamaría et al. (2021) in Spain, where the researchers identified the stress levels, anxiety, and depression among 1,633 teachers, it was found that teachers demonstrated a high percentage of stress symptoms, anxiety, and depression because of the unclear guidelines, new measures, and insecurities brought about by the COVID-19. Although such health issues teachers experienced were primarily caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, some pedagogical challenges also contributed to teachers' negative mental wellbeing (see Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021; Ulla and Achivar, 2021; Ulla and Perales, 2021b). Factors like the lack of teacher skills and knowledge in conducting remote or online teaching, the lack of internet connectivity, gadgets, and other devices, the challenges in making the teaching materials suitable for online and remote teaching and learning environments, the availability of a teaching and learning platform, and the issue on what teaching methodology and strategy will work online or remotely (Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021; Ulla and Achivar, 2021; Ulla and Perales, 2021a).

However, despite the drastic, inevitable changes in the educational landscape and mental health issues among teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have had to continue delivering their lessons and providing learning support to their learners. Likewise, schools and universities adjusted the teaching and learning process to adapt to the educational needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although some schools had no learning management systems (Ulla and Achivar, 2021; Ulla and Perales, 2021a), they subscribed to paid online platforms such as Zoom and utilized other platforms like Moodle and Microsoft teams. Using these platforms, teachers conducted asynchronous and synchronous teaching. Other schools utilize social media networks not only to support and reach out to learners in their remote learning but also as teaching and learning platforms (Aduba and Mayowa-Adebara, 2022). Thus, some teachers acknowledged that their teaching experience during the COVID-19 pandemic was a learning one and considered it one of their professional development activities (Ulla and Perales, 2021b).

Considering how teachers managed their pedagogical practices despite facing and experiencing a number of issues in the remote and online teaching and learning process, it can be said that teachers withstood the challenges since they have had to continue teaching and be committed to the teaching profession. Such an attitude is defined by Searing et al. (2021) as resiliency, describing someone who has "the ability to withstand adverse conditions while still delivering services" (p. 181). As noted by Raghunathan et al. (2022), the resiliency of an educational system in the pandemic can be portrayed in three aspects:

people, technology, and environment. The first aspect, the people, are the ones who are tested and challenged the most. Specifically, teachers are the ones who are directly affected by the sudden transition to remote and online teaching.

Since teachers are considered the soul of teaching (Gao and Cui, 2022), it is deemed important to explore how they build pedagogical resilience and perceive the concept of pedagogical resilience during the teaching and learning process in the COVID-19 pandemic. Such studies can inform other teachers, policy-makers, and school administrators to develop strategies and policies that benefit teachers and the schools. Although there has been a number of studies that examined teachers' resiliency (see Mrstik et al., 2019; Entesari et al., 2020; Ratanasiripong et al., 2020), studies that examined how teachers perceived pedagogical resilience, and how teachers build resilience in pedagogy during the COVID-19 pandemic are scarce.

This brief research report explores the concept of pedagogical resilience in education during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspectives of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines and Thailand and how these teachers build resiliency in their pedagogical practices. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do teachers perceive pedagogical resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How is pedagogical resilience reflected in teachers' teaching design?

Methodology

Employing the qualitative research design and phenomenology as a method (Groenewald, 2004), this report is part of the larger study on teachers' perceptions of pedagogical resilience among university academics in Thailand and the Philippines. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to collect the data.

As a qualitative research methodological design, phenomenology aims to describe and understand participants' lived experiences of a particular phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004; Ulla and Perales, 2021a). In this study, teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic is a phenomenon that the researchers wanted to explore and understand how teachers' experiences shaped their perception of pedagogical resilience in remote and online teaching.

Setting and participants

Participants were part of the research project facilitated by two universities in the Philippines and Thailand. These two universities signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU)

to conduct a collaborative research project. While these two universities were from two countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), they were located outside the countries' metropolis. However, the goal of this paper is not to compare teachers' teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim is to explore how these teachers perceived pedagogical resilience.

A total of 20 prospective participants were invited and contacted through email and social media applications (such as messenger, line, etc.) to participate in the study. However, only 12 (eight from the Philippines and four from Thailand) agreed to participate in the study. Their age ranged from 30 to 50 years old and had a wide range of teaching experiences (5–15 years) in different educational fields such as English language teaching, Information Technology, Management, and Social Science. Thus, participants were teaching various general education courses in two universities.

Moreover, two of the participants held Ph.D, while 10 obtained master's degree in education. All of them had online teaching experiences of at least 1 year, if not 2 years during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As this study involved human subjects, ethical consideration was taken into account by obtaining informed consent from all the participants who agreed to volunteer. They were informed about the research objectives and ensured that their identity (by using pseudonyms T1, T2 . . . T12) and information given during the interviews and FGDs will be taken care of with confidentiality. Further, they were also given full right to withdraw as participants at any given time.

Data collection and analysis

As for the data collection, it took researchers almost 3 months to collect the whole set of data. Often, we experienced a mismatch of timing between researchers and participants since both were full-time teachers. This caused the delay in data collection. The data collection involved two phases, semi-structured interviews and FGD. Individual semi-structured interviews, which lasted for an average of 40 min, were conducted first by the researchers. This was followed by FGD after a few days. The FGD, conducted in presence of at least two researchers and 6 participants, lasted for almost 2 h. Both semi-structured interviews and FGD were conducted in English using the Zoom video conferencing tool and it was recorded for analysis. Responses were then transcribed verbatim. Transcribed data were returned to the participants individually to check for accuracy.

Data analysis was done using thematic analysis. To avoid researchers' biases, researchers agreed to perform thematic analyses separately using the guideline proposed by Braun and Clarke (2012), which includes reading and re-reading transcription, coding and collating, coding themes, and then

finalizing themes. The themes that were developed from the individual analysis were discussed and finalized in a group's research meeting. This discussion was primarily done to establish the reliability and accuracy of generated themes. In doing so, three main themes and several sub-themes were developed under the pedagogical resilience of HEIs teachers during the covid pandemic.

Findings

Teachers' perception of pedagogical resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic

Although teachers acknowledged that conducting classes remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging since they did not have the experience, they perceived pedagogical resilience as the ability to be patient, act immediately, and adapt to the changing landscape in education during a health crisis. Such perceptions allowed them to design their teaching and learning environment that is relevant and according to the needs of the COVID-19 situation. For instance,

To be honest, I do not have an experience in conducting an online class. At first, I was not sure of what I was going to do. But, I was very patient with the sudden change of the teaching and learning policies during this time. I accepted the fact that this [online class] is already our reality, our new normal. So, I think the best way to deal with this is to be patient and adaptable to this new normal in education (T1).

As can be reflected, teachers perceived and equated resilience to patience. The term resilience for them is an emotional state which signifies mental resistance to difficulties and stresses. The results further revealed that teachers' patience has considerably become one of the traits that most teachers had. It enables them to resiliently plan for how they would respond to the pandemic and how they will survive the challenges.

Patience makes me more resilient; it allows me to hang in there a little longer and keep going. It helped me work harder during the pandemic, which improved my self-confidence and self-esteem. As for me, patience also means resilience; being conscious of our thoughts and emotions allows us to think and make decisions properly, which is especially crucial during difficult situations (T2).

For one teacher-participant, he perceived pedagogical resilience as being able to decide and act on the teaching and learning needs immediately during the COVID-19 pandemic. He stressed:

This is my first time to conduct classes remotely. When the university announced that we're going to move our classes to online teaching, I knew that I had to prepare myself and act immediately on the things that I needed to do to make my online teaching as effective as possible. This is not the time to complain because all teachers are also experiencing the same. I looked at my teaching materials and examined how could I make these materials suitable for online learning. You know, as teachers, we should be flexible (T3).

Moreover, it can also be reflected from the responses that self-realization and clear mindset are observed and practiced among the participants. Such an attitude shows their ability to overcome challenges that also defines their being resilient individuals. The results imply that with a strong and clear mind a person can easily think of ways to survive a very stressful situation.

I was able to overcome challenges by first accepting the reality of the situation - I realized that things won't work if I continue to contemplate on the challenges so quickly I gathered my thoughts and resolve to use my potentials and become more realistic in going over my plans for my students, like how will I communicate to them and reach out to them and how will I still facilitate to them quality learning experiences (T4).

Participants also responded that it was critical to capitalize on a type of responsive planning that focuses on selecting instructional modalities and feasible platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we faced the devastating effects of the pandemic on teaching and learning processes, we needed to devise alternative methods and mechanisms to ensure quality instruction. I wanted my students to feel good about their learning situations. For me urgency is a synthesis of thoughts, feelings, and actions (T5).

Teacher-participant 9 supported the statement of teacher-participant 5, highlighting that planning should be done before each class start every week.

Early preparation of instructional materials and teaching modalities has become critical to surviving the rigorous workloads as teachers during the pandemic. One of the first things I did was I drafted a plan which included how I will be able to communicate and reach out to my students during the pandemic. I also looked into the remaining months of the academic year and adjusted the activities intended for the students. As for me, efficiency in working out with all those things really helped me to implement resilient teaching and learning strategies (T9).

The response demonstrated the teachers' commitment to providing students with high-quality education. Despite the difficult circumstances during the pandemic, they devised a strategy that assisted them in coping and improved their odds of maintaining high-quality teaching and learning.

There shall always be a sense of urgency most especially during the time of anxieties and confusion. Action should immediately be implemented and done in order not to aggravate a kind of impending situation. It was an urgent call for me to adopt ways to reach out to my students, because at stake was their education (T6).

Pedagogical resilience as reflected in teachers' teaching design

During the interview, teacher-participants also recognized some challenges in their teaching design. One of these challenges is developing teaching materials suitable for remote and online teaching. One of the teacher-participants mentioned:

I had to put in extra work when developing the content of educational materials because I had to consider how students would access, comprehend, and learn from them. Preparing materials during this time is really challenging because you start from the scratch. We have available materials already but those are only for face-to-face classes (T7).

However, teachers found ways to address such an issue by establishing relationships among their co-teachers, gaining knowledge from online training, and strengthening the commitment toward the teaching profession.

During moments of significant struggle and challenge, I established relationships, gained knowledge, forged character, and strengthened the commitment that would eventually lead towards success. I also was able to lean into fear and find the strength and energy to act based on how I think and believe things could get better. The way I approach the challenges in teaching during the pandemic has made me more resilient (T8).

The responses also revealed that as teachers were overcoming challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, they also strengthened their relationships with their coworkers and developed consistent communication with them. It was also significant to note that during the pandemic, they were considering their relationship and communication with their co-workers as something that helped them to cope with the challenges. This further implies that social interaction and effective communication between individuals

in an organization is really important factors to create an atmosphere of resilience.

Overcoming challenges, I learned to listen to my emotions and concerns - reassure myself that it is ok to feel this way as I recognized myself coping with the pandemic and trying to make possible ways to make things normal with my students. I consulted friends and coworkers just to vent my feelings and to also ask for some assistance since it was not easy to use a whole new platform in teaching which I was totally not familiar with (T5).

Flexibility in the teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic was also one of the attitudes held among the participants. Such flexibility also allows them to manage their teaching activities and understand their students. For instance,

There were many aspects of my teaching strategies and activities that I was able to flexibly adjust and improve simply because it was deemed necessary to not neglect students' learning. The majority of my teaching materials have been redesigned and reconstructed to be more tailored to what the students can easily access, understand, and remember. To adjust the approaches and methodologies in teaching I used the blended learning approach, as well as the use of technology aided instruction and contextualized modules (T9).

One participant also shared an interesting thought about how she made herself flexible in her teaching and learning strategies.

The first thing I did to gather data on my students' preferences in participating and attending the class was to consult with them. I had to do this because I wanted to determine the extent of preparation and adjustments I would have to make. The consultation enlightened me about the students' chosen instructional modality and the reasons for that choice. Significantly, I was able to make flexible adjustments to my teaching and learning strategies and activities as a result of the consultation (T10).

Participants also revealed that, while their respective schools were making significant adjustments during the transition of classes to remote and online teaching, they demonstrated a strong commitment to finding alternative ways to implement meaningful and relevant teaching and learning strategies. This is evident in the following excerpt:

I have become very committed to equipping myself with the knowledge and skills needed to use online platforms, which aided the teaching and learning activities that I provided to her students (T11).

Participants also perceived that pedagogical resilience means a commitment to teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic by improving oneself.

I stayed committed to realigning my teaching and learning practices with the requirements of my learners. In order to become familiar with certain new approaches and trends in facilitating quality teaching and learning in the midst of the pandemic, I had to attend a number of training sessions and seminars (T12).

The strategies for teaching and learning were also described as naturally learner-centered. As participants in both countries adapted to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education, they made their teaching and learning processes and practices more learner-centered. One participant shared:

I had to navigate a variety of alternatives while still meeting the demands and needs of my students' learning. The majority of online strategies have been focused on the facilitation of activities that can be done individually or in groups. I was considering how I could reach out to students who were struggling with blended instruction due to a variety of issues, including poor internet connectivity. For me, the truest sense of learner-centered instruction is realized when students can still cope with adversity and demonstrate practical and lifelong learning outcomes (T5).

The finding also reflects that even in the most difficult times the pursuit for a learner-centered approach can still be sustained. This characteristic of teaching and learning processes has to be promoted as always, since the core concern of education is the learners. Reinventing strategies and approaches may help teachers to stay in the lime light of relevant and responsive instruction. Teacher 8 mentioned:

"I considered putting aside my favorite unit plans and tried-and-true classroom management strategies to learn new teaching methods that are better suited to current circumstances was the first step I took toward making the teaching and learning strategies completely learner-centered. Also, I had to deliver direct education through pre-recorded online videos, allowing my students to focus on personal check-ins, group discussions, tailored feedback, and targeted instruction, for example (T8)".

Discussion

This brief research report explores the concept of pedagogical resilience in education during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspectives of HEIs in the Philippines

and Thailand and how these teachers build resiliency in their pedagogical practices. The findings revealed that teachers' pedagogical resilience in education was influenced by their personal and professional attitudes toward teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and their social relations with their colleagues and students. Such attitudes allowed them to manage their teaching and learning design, meeting the needs of the new normal in education, the online and remote teaching. These findings provide a clear understanding of the conceptualization of pedagogical resilience from the perspectives of teachers in the Philippines and Thailand.

Adapting to unforeseen changes is frequently associated with resilience. Wald et al. (2006) maintained that resilience refers to the positive adaptation and the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity. In education, the concept of resiliency has also been explored by education scholars and practitioners (see Mrstik et al., 2019; Entesari et al., 2020; Ratanasiripong et al., 2020) to describe how teachers or the curriculum adapt to and caters to the changing landscape, needs, and requirements of society. In the present study, although teachers did not have experience in conducting online and remote classes, they remained patient, flexible, and adaptive to the current teaching state of emergency remote teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. First, they believed that accepting and embracing the situation is essential to address the issues in online and remote teaching. As pointed out in the findings, teachers accepted the situation, clearing their minds and allowing them to think and decide on the teaching and learning activities for their students in the new teaching environment. This finding corroborated with the findings by Xun et al. (2021), emphasizing that teachers' "professional agency during the COVID-19 pandemic revolved around facilitating students' academic learning, in the new online learning environment" (p. 746). This suggests that despite their lack of online teaching experience, teachers used their professional agency to provide their learners with the best learning experience possible.

Second, they maintained and developed a community and relationships with their colleagues. Forming and building relationships with their colleagues provided them with a community where a support system was afforded. Although they faced many challenges, they drew strength from their commitment to their profession. They developed positivity on the challenges that confronted them during their teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide students with a continuous learning process amidst the pandemic. Such an attitude suggests that pedagogical resilience is personal, professional, and social. In the words of Schwartzman (2020), resilience is "a combination of realistic acknowledgment of limitations and possibilities as well as determination to persist and improve. . . (It) describes the ongoing processes of coping with trauma in positive ways" (p. 510).

Furthermore, teachers acknowledged that they were not the only teachers affected by the sudden transition to remote and online teaching in the world. Thus, facing the issues they had may be the only way for them to address those issues. They learned to adapt to and be positive about the situation by finding solutions to the issues they faced. They also demonstrated personal and professional resilience and social resilience.

Conclusion and implications

The present study unpacks the concept of pedagogical resilience from the perspectives of university academics in Thailand and the Philippines. Employing phenomenology as a qualitative research design and FGDs and semi-structured interviews as methods, findings revealed that pedagogical resilience is a concept that participants perceived to be a positive attitude toward online and remote teaching during a health crisis. Such a positive attitude allowed teachers to design their teaching and learning environment that is relevant and according to the needs of the COVID-19 situation.

The study's findings provide implications for other schools and universities, teachers, and policy-makers not only in the ASEAN region but also globally. Teachers, who are essential people in the teaching and learning process, must be afforded activities to enhance and develop their teaching skills, emotional and mental wellbeing, and relationship with their colleagues. Teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic sees the need for teachers to be prepared pedagogically, emotionally, physically, and mentally to survive and be committed to the teaching profession. Without the support from the schools and universities, colleagues, and their commitment to the teaching profession, these teachers would not have continued remote and online teaching. Likewise, school administrators should also consider their teachers' wellbeing and that they are not alone in the sudden transition from face-to-face classes to remote and online classes.

Furthermore, while the present study offers findings that highlight teachers' perspectives of pedagogical resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has its limitations. First, the findings were based on teacher-participants from two selected contexts (the Philippines and Thailand universities). Studies from other contexts would offer different perspectives on pedagogical resilience based on how teachers deal with their teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, the study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design. Future research may wish to carry out a similar study using quantitative methods with a greater number of participants to corroborate the present findings. Lastly, and most importantly,

given that this study used a convenience sampling technique to recruit teacher-participants from different contexts and utilized interviews as a method, future studies may find it interesting to recruit participants from the same contexts using other qualitative methods to triangulate the data.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

CZ prepared the interview questions. FB wrote the literature review. TW prepared and wrote the methodology. PP helped participants recruitment. MU edited and revised the

manuscript. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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