

Navigating Online Teaching: Teachers' Challenges and Experiences as a Basis for Policy Development

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Abstract. Online teaching has become an integral part of the educational landscape, continuing even beyond the pandemic. While research on online teaching has expanded, a gap remains in integrating teachers' practical challenges and experiences into policy development. This led to the conduct of this study, which aimed to explore the challenges and experiences encountered by teachers in online teaching, establishing a basis for policy development. In this study, a mixed-method approach was used, collecting quantitative data through surveys and qualitative data via open-ended questions and interviews. Participants were core and affiliate faculty from the Elementary Education department of Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU), Philippines. Experts validated the instruments, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, as well as content and thematic analyses. Findings revealed that all participating teachers (100%) encountered varying challenges while delivering online instruction. Among these challenges, fostering class interaction and maintaining student motivation posed the most significant difficulty, with a mean score of 2.37. Connectivity and technical issues, as well as the demands of accomplishing teaching-learning tasks, were also identified as moderate challenges, both with a mean score of 2.23. Although personal and health-related concerns got the lowest mean score (1.92), they still contributed to the overall stress and difficulty of teaching online. Despite these challenges, teachers recognized the benefits derived from their online teaching experiences. The study's findings suggest the need for school policies to enhance internet accessibility, establish robust IT support systems, prepare teachers for online teaching, implement a system to monitor student participation, and promote a well-balanced work-life balance for teachers. By addressing these key areas, schools can create a more effective, supportive, and sustainable environment for online teaching and learning.

Keywords: Basis; Challenges; Experiences; Online teaching; Policy development

1.0 Introduction

Online teaching has been a part of the educational system. While it gained widespread adoption during the pandemic, many schools continue to implement online teaching due to the numerous educational opportunities it offers. These include flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and the convenience of time and space (Sadiku et al., 2018). Online teaching allows teachers to explore innovative teaching strategies, enhance traditional classroom methods, expand curriculum accessibility, and improve professional fulfillment. However, despite these advantages, online teaching presents both opportunities and challenges.

Research has documented the various challenges that teachers encounter in online teaching. Among the most commonly reported issues are inadequate access to technology (Olaniyan & Uzorka, 2024; Salman et al., 2024; Silva & Coutinho, 2024), difficulty in sustaining student engagement (Aldayel, 2024; D; Noor et al., 2024), unstable

internet connectivity (Aizad et al., 2024; Gusti, 2024; Kaur & Gopal, 2024), and limited teacher preparedness or knowledge regarding online instruction (Hafizi et al., 2024; Richards & Thompson, 2023; Salmorin & Motus, 2024). Gurung (2021) further emphasized the struggle to reach students in remote areas, where internet access and electricity are unavailable. Similarly, Rasheed et al. (2020) identified poor communication and limited interaction between teachers and students as a significant challenge, an issue supported by Coman et al. (2020), who emphasized the difficulty teachers face in motivating students in online discussions compared to traditional face-to-face instruction.

Another pressing concern is the challenge of accurately assessing student comprehension and engagement in virtual settings. Even before the pandemic, concerns over the quality of online instruction were already present (Akyal & Garrison, 2008; Allen & Seaman, 2013; Bolliger et al., 2014). The added pressure of limited preparation time in online formats has only heightened these concerns, often resulting in diminished instructional quality and increased teacher frustration. Quevillon (2020) acknowledged that online teaching presents significant demands on teachers, requiring them to restructure course content, adopt new pedagogical strategies, and integrate unfamiliar technological tools.

In light of these challenges, Gentner (2020) argues that the primary issue is not the shift from face-to-face to online teaching but rather the shift in teachers' attitudes toward online instruction. A more positive outlook on online teaching can emerge when teachers receive proper preparation, clear guidance, and well-defined policies and procedures to follow. Higley (2014) emphasizes the importance of considering teachers' experiences in online teaching to ensure effective, successful, and engaging teaching and learning. Understanding teachers' challenges and experiences is crucial for enhancing instructional effectiveness, overcoming barriers, enriching student learning experiences, and, most importantly, informing the development of evidence-based policies. Policies should be grounded in real-world experiences rather than theoretical assumptions to effectively meet teachers' needs and concerns, ultimately leading to more efficient online teaching practices. Despite the growing number of studies on online teaching, a gap remains in considering teachers' practical experiences, challenges, and insights in policy development. Without direct input from teachers, policies may fail to address the real concerns and challenges in online teaching.

Thus, this study aimed to explore teachers' challenges and experiences in online teaching, identifying bases for policy development that ensure future online teaching policies are responsive, practical, and supportive of teachers' needs. Existing studies emphasize the need for research-informed policies for online teaching that ensure effective online teaching environments (Connolly et al., 2020; Ewusi-Mensah et al., 2024; Manca et al., 2021). By highlighting the teachers' challenges and experiences, this study can serve as a platform to amplify teachers' voices and shed light on the realities they face in online teaching. Furthermore, the results could serve as a foundation for academic institutions to develop strategies, implement appropriate interventions, and provide the necessary support to teachers. Furthermore, the findings could assist curriculum planners in designing well-structured and effective online courses that align with both teacher and student needs.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problems. This approach is efficient for exploring research questions that require a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding than either method alone can provide (Shorten & Smith, 2017). It enables a more comprehensive examination of teachers' working conditions, particularly their challenges and experiences in online teaching, providing valuable insights for policy development. By combining quantitative data (closed-ended responses) with qualitative data (open-ended responses), this approach ensures a more in-depth analysis of the research problems.

2.2 Research Locale

This study was conducted at Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU), specifically within the Elementary Education (EEd) department, located at Castro Avenue, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, Philippines.

2.3 Research Participants

The study participants comprised 18 faculty members from the EEd department at MMSU, Philippines. A total enumeration sampling design was used, encompassing both core faculty and affiliate faculty—those from other

departments with teaching assignments in the EEd department. Participants were selected based on their departmental affiliation, as they play a significant role in shaping online teaching policies for the department. All 18 faculty members completed the survey questionnaire. For the selection of interviewees, stratified sampling was employed, categorizing participants by age group and the courses they taught. The sample size for the interviews was determined using the principle of theoretical data saturation, with participant selection continuing until no new information was obtained.

2.4 Research Instrument

The study employed two researcher-made data-gathering instruments: a survey questionnaire and an interview guide. The survey questionnaire collected data on the challenges and experiences of teachers in online teaching and was structured into three parts. The first part gathered demographic information about the participants. The second part consisted of statements assessing participants' level of agreement regarding the challenges they faced in online teaching. The third part included open-ended questions, allowing participants to elaborate in detail on their experiences.

Based on the survey results, an interview guide was developed to validate and enrich the data further. The guide was pilot-tested to ensure clarity, and interviews were conducted using the native language of the participants to facilitate open and authentic responses. Both instruments underwent expert review and validation to ensure reliability and validity. The survey questionnaire demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.83. Also, the interview guide achieved a mean validity score of 4.67 out of 5, based on the evaluations from experts. A test run was likewise conducted to confirm that participants clearly understood the questions.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

Data were collected through surveys and interviews with 18 faculty members of the EEd department at MMSU. The survey questionnaire gathered information on teachers' challenges in online teaching, while open-ended questions allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences. Hard copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and participants were given 10 working days to complete them. The collected survey data were analyzed and interpreted, serving as the basis for developing an interview guide. Face-to-face interviews were then conducted with selected participants to gain deeper insights into their challenges and experiences in online teaching, as well as to validate and triangulate the survey findings. The interview process lasted for 14 days.

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using statistical methods, including frequency counts and mean calculations based on the three-point Likert scale developed by Pimentel (2019). For qualitative data from the survey (short-answer responses), content analysis, as employed by Delve (2022), was used to identify key patterns. Both manifest analysis (directly stated messages) and latent analysis (implied messages) were considered to interpret responses. Interview responses underwent thematic analysis. Initially, responses were classified into codes, then categorized, and subsequently grouped into emerging themes. Recurring codes and categories were examined to determine the common challenges and experiences of teachers. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Clarke & Braun's (2006) thematic analysis protocol with the following steps: (1) familiarizing with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) reviewing themes; (4) defining and naming themes; and (5) producing the report. The analysis presents a concise, logical, and engaging narrative of the data's findings, both within and across themes.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical considerations. Before data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the University Research Ethics Review Board (URERB) of MMSU under Reference Number 2022-296. Upon receiving approval, the researchers thoroughly explained the study's purpose, the confidentiality of responses, and the participants' rights. Participation was entirely voluntary, and those who expressed interest were provided with an informed consent form before data collection.

To maintain confidentiality, all survey and interview data were securely stored and protected. Participants' real names were not disclosed in the manuscript; instead, unique codes were assigned to them. Also, writing names on the survey questionnaire was optional. During the interviews, only audio recordings were taken, ensuring that participants' faces were not captured on camera. All recorded interviews were used solely for this study and were discarded upon its completion.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the 18 faculty members is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of the Participants (n=18)*

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	6	33.33
Female	12	66.67
Age		
20-30	4	22.22
31-40	5	27.28
41-50	6	33.33
51-60	3	16.67
Field of Specialization		
English & Filipino	9	50.00
Guidance	2	11.11
Science	3	16.67
Social Studies	1	5.56
MAPEH	3	16.67
No. of Years in Service		
1-10	5	27.78
11-20	6	33.33
21-30	5	27.28
31-40	2	11.11
Faculty Classification		
Core	12	66.67
Affiliate	6	33.33

A total of 18 faculty members participated, comprising 12 core faculty members and six affiliate faculty members from other departments. Among them, six are male (33.33%) and 12 are female (66.67%). The majority belong to the 41–50 age group (33.33%), followed by the 31–40 age group (27.28%), the 20–30 age group (22.22%), and the 51–60 age group (16.67%). In terms of specialization, most participants are language teachers, with nine (50.00%) teaching English and Filipino, while three (16.67%) teach Science, and also offer MAPEH, with two (11.11%) specializing in Guidance and one (5.56%) in Social Studies. Experiences also vary, with six (33.33%) faculty members having 11–20 years of service, five (27.28%) with 1–10 years, five with (27.28%) 21–30 years, and only two (11.11%) with 31–40 years. Core faculty members, 12 (66.67%), outnumber affiliate faculty, 6 (33.33%), indicating that most participants hold permanent positions in the department.

The diverse profile of participants suggests varying challenges and experiences in online teaching. Age differences may influence adaptability to technology, with younger faculty members adjusting more easily than their older counterparts. Specialization also plays a crucial role, as subjects like Science and MAPEH face greater difficulties transitioning to online formats due to the need for laboratories and specialized facilities. Similarly, language teachers may encounter more challenges in facilitating in-class interaction and communication compared to teachers of other subjects. Also, core and affiliate faculty may receive different levels of departmental support, highlighting the need for tailored training and resources to address their specific challenges. These variations signify the importance of implementing targeted strategies to ensure that all faculty members, regardless of age, specialization, or affiliation, are adequately equipped to navigate online teaching effectively.

3.2 Teachers' Challenges in Online Teaching

Online teaching has presented a range of challenges, affecting teachers' ability to deliver effective instruction and maintain clear communication with students. Survey findings highlight key difficulties, including connectivity and technical issues, challenges in completing teaching and learning tasks, class interaction, and student motivation, as well as personal and health-related concerns.

Connectivity and Technical Challenges

Table 2 displays the connectivity and technical challenges teachers faced in online teaching. Connectivity and technical challenges faced by teachers yielded an overall mean of 2.23, which posed a moderate challenge to the teachers. The most significant challenge was the difficulty in reaching students in remote areas due to poor or unavailable network connections, with a mean score of 2.61, which posed a considerable challenge to the teachers.

Weak signals and slow connections also posed a challenge, with a mean of 2.28. In contrast, issues such as delayed messages, viewing difficulties, and loss of signal during online discussions had a mean of 2.05, indicating a moderate impact.

Table 2. *Connectivity and Technical Challenges Encountered by Teachers*

Indicators / Items	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. Weak signal / slow connection	2.28	To a moderate extent
2. Lack of an appropriate gadget to use	1.61	Not at all
3. Lack of technical skills	1.61	Not at all
4. Problem on online platforms	1.39	Not at all
5. Problems like delayed messages, viewing, and loss of signal during discussions	2.05	To a moderate extent
6. Inability to use gadgets	1.17	Not at all
7. Power interruption	1.83	To a moderate extent
8. Lack of technical / software knowledge	1.78	To a moderate extent
9. Difficulty in reaching students in remote areas	2.61	To a great extent
Section Mean	2.33	To a moderate extent

These quantitative findings align with the qualitative data gathered through interviews, as teachers consistently shared experiences that mirrored the survey results, particularly on the unstable internet connectivity. Frequent disruptions during Zoom and Google Meet sessions interrupted the flow of instruction, which made it difficult for teachers to maintain classroom continuity. In some cases, teachers were forced to relocate to areas with stronger signal reception to conduct their classes. This challenge significantly impacted teaching effectiveness as it disrupted the stability of lesson delivery and reduced valuable instructional time. The time and effort to find suitable locations not only delayed class sessions but also lowered student motivation and engagement.

The stress and fatigue caused by these challenges affected teachers' ability to focus and respond effectively to students' needs during classes. Concerns about where and how lessons would be conducted diverted attention from instructional quality. These conditions ultimately led to reduced teacher responsiveness, delays in instruction, and student disengagement. Both quantitative and qualitative data reveal the extent to which poor connectivity hinders the delivery of lessons and affects the overall teaching and learning experience.

Moreover, many teachers also admitted to struggling with technical skills, which made it difficult for them to prepare instructional materials, navigate online platforms, and manage student submissions. Despite these challenges, they adapted by distributing instructional materials through class representatives, including modules, workbooks, PowerPoint presentations, videos, and lecture notes. They also implemented flexible deadlines and designed activities that required minimal reliance on complex applications to accommodate connectivity issues.

The results of this study emphasize the necessity for enhanced digital infrastructure and teachers' training to facilitate effective online teaching. The interruptions resulting from unreliable connections and insufficient technical expertise suggest the need for improved internet service, especially in rural regions, as well as training initiatives to enhance teachers' digital competencies.

The findings align with Gurung (2021), who reported that 61.3% of teachers encountered internet connectivity issues while conducting online classes, highlighting its significant impact on remote teaching. Additionally, Gurung noted that limited technical skills posed a significant challenge, with many teachers struggling to manage virtual classrooms, including logging into platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet. To address these difficulties, teachers sought assistance from their younger colleagues and used their free time to learn and explore computer applications, thereby enhancing their digital literacy. Similarly, Pallavi (2020) found that frequent internet disruptions hindered teachers' ability to conduct seamless online classes, further emphasizing the challenges associated with online teaching.

Challenges in Accomplishing Teaching-Learning Tasks

Table 3 outlines the challenges teachers encountered in accomplishing teaching and learning tasks during online teaching. Table 3 shows that teachers faced moderate challenges in accomplishing teaching-learning tasks, with an overall mean rating of 2.23. The most significant difficulties were monitoring student discipline ($m = 2.67$) and revising lesson plans ($m = 2.47$), while tracking student progress ($m = 2.33$) also posed a moderate challenge. These quantitative results align closely with the qualitative data from interviews, where teachers reported that

maintaining student discipline and attendance was particularly challenging in online instruction. Many students logged in late, stayed for only 15–20 minutes, or disconnected within 10 minutes of the start. These conditions made it difficult for teachers to ensure engagement and continuity of learning. Teachers cited several reasons for low attendance, which include work commitments, limited access to mobile data, and poor internet connectivity. Despite these challenges, teachers made efforts to increase student participation by offering incentives such as GCash load and additional points.

Table 3. *Challenges in Accomplishing Teaching-Learning Tasks Encountered by Teachers*

Indicators / Items	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. Difficulty in teaching Math subjects online	1.91	To a moderate extent
2. Difficulty in teaching lesson plans through online	2.14	To a moderate extent
3. Difficulty in correcting the lesson plans of students	2.47	To a great extent
4. Difficulty in monitoring students' discipline and attendance	2.67	To a great extent
5. Challenges to keep track of students' progress	2.33	To a moderate extent
6. Difficulty in preparing the course content during online discussions	1.88	To a moderate extent
Section Mean	2.23	To a moderate extent

The results indicate that overseeing student discipline, reviewing lesson plans, and tracking student progress were significant challenges in online teaching. Poor attendance is primarily due to a lack of discipline, which hinders the completion of teaching and learning tasks. While teachers attempted to address these issues by offering incentives, the findings suggest the necessity for creative approaches and digital tracking tools to boost discipline and participation in virtual settings. Creative approaches may include gamification, where students are exposed to game-like experiences that allow them to earn points, badges, or other rewards for participation, completing assignments, and exhibiting positive behavior. Platforms like Kahoot, Quizizz, and Classcraft can be employed to make learning more interactive and to sustain student interest and good behavior. Real-time engagement tools, such as polls, quizzes, and interactive whiteboards, can also help maintain student engagement and minimize distractions. Additionally, digital tracking tools can be used to monitor student participation and behavior. Learning management systems (LMSs), such as Google Classroom, Blackboard, and Canvas, can be used to track student attendance, assignment completion, and participation. Using these methods may create a well-organized and interactive online teaching and learning experience.

The results of this study are consistent with earlier research, which indicated that 57.03% of teachers found it difficult to enforce discipline in online classes because they lacked physical control over students (Gurung, 2021). In the absence of a traditional classroom environment, teachers faced challenges in observing student behavior, promoting participation, and maintaining interest throughout lessons. Many students lost focus, participated passively in classes, and were unmotivated to complete learning tasks (Goldstein et al., 2020; Martin, 2019). The lack of direct monitoring of students caused problems, such as students multitasking, shutting off cameras, or even skipping classes.

Challenges in Class Interaction and Motivation

The challenges teachers faced in class interaction and motivation during online teaching are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. *Challenges in Class Interaction and Motivation Encountered by Teachers*

Indicators / Items	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. Communication problems	2.22	To a moderate extent
2. Lack of teacher-student interaction	2.39	To a moderate extent
3. Difficult to motivate students	2.44	To a great extent
4. Cannot give a collaborative task to students	2.44	To a great extent
Section Mean	2.37	To a great extent

Table 4 indicates that class interaction and motivation posed the most significant challenge for teachers, affecting them to a great extent, with an overall mean rating of 2.37. The most pressing difficulties were motivating students and assigning collaborative tasks, both of which received a mean rating of 2.44, indicating their considerable impact on teaching. Moreover, communication barriers, such as students struggling to understand instructions (mean = 2.22) and limited teacher-student interaction (mean = 2.39), were identified as moderate challenges. Interviews confirmed these issues, with teachers reporting poor-quality online interactions, delayed feedback, and

decreased student engagement. Many students were reluctant to participate in discussions or respond to questions, further hindering engagement. To address these challenges, teachers implemented creative group activities, required weekly reflections, and utilized Messenger group chats to share reminders, instructions, and deadlines, improving communication. Some also reached out via phone calls when necessary to ensure students remained informed and involved.

The results emphasize the necessity for enhanced student involvement and communication approaches in online teaching. Challenges in motivating students, assigning group activities, and addressing communication challenges indicate that online interactions fall short of the immediacy and involvement found in in-person teaching. Students' hesitation to engage and participate hinders both efficient teaching and learning. Although teachers utilized techniques such as interactive sessions, group discussions, and direct calls to increase participation, these results suggest the need for more organized and dynamic online teaching approaches.

The results of the study align with the research findings of Yusrilita (2020), who reported that a lack of student interest and low participation were common challenges in online classes. Teachers often struggled to assess student engagement, as many refused to turn on their cameras, frequently attributing it to poor internet connectivity. Similarly, Mese & Sevilen (2021) found that students perceived online learning as demotivating due to reduced social interaction, mismatched expectations, and disorganized learning environments. These factors likely contributed to the difficulties teachers faced in maintaining class interaction and motivation, revealing the need for more interactive and structured online teaching techniques and approaches.

Personal and Health Challenges

Table 5 presents the personal and health challenges that teachers encountered during online teaching.

Table 5. *Personal and Health Challenges Encountered by Teachers*

Indicators / Items	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. Physical health issues	1.94	To a moderate extent
2. Mental health struggle	1.94	To a moderate extent
3. Emotional health issues	1.94	To a moderate extent
4. Difficulty in adapting to online teaching	1.83	To a moderate extent
5. Poor time management	1.94	To a moderate extent
Section Mean	1.92	To a great extent

The data show that personal and health issues presented moderate challenges for teachers, with an overall mean rating of 1.92. Physical and emotional health struggles, difficulties adapting to online teaching, poor time management, and personal distractions were noted but did not significantly hinder their ability to teach. During interviews, many teachers reported experiencing physical strain, such as frozen shoulder from prolonged computer use and eye irritation due to extended screen exposure. One teacher shared that the increased workload left little time for exercise and led to sleep deprivation, as preparing materials for online teaching required significantly more time than for face-to-face classes.

Despite these challenges, the findings suggest that teachers demonstrated resilience and adaptability, allowing them to navigate the demands of online instruction while maintaining a strong commitment to their roles. However, the results underscore the impact of online teaching on teachers' well-being, emphasizing the need for improved work-life balance and institutional support. Although personal and health issues were not severe, extended screen time, physical strain, and increased workload had an impact on teachers' overall well-being. The difficulty of managing time and adapting to online teaching suggests the need for institutional assistance, including digital proficiency training, workload adjustments, and health support programs. Addressing these concerns can enhance teacher effectiveness and overall job satisfaction in online teaching environments. The claim that online teaching requires more preparation time than face-to-face instruction is supported by Gurung (2021), who found that the majority of teacher respondents reported significantly greater time demands for course preparation. According to the study, 62.7% of respondents agreed that developing course content for online instruction was more challenging, as they had to convert their subject matter into digital formats. This included creating PowerPoint presentations, documents, spreadsheets, and recorded video lectures. Teachers noted that structuring, designing, and adapting content for a virtual teaching environment required considerably more effort than traditional classroom teaching, further reinforcing the need for institutional support in managing workload and resources.

Other Challenges

In addition to the previously mentioned challenges, interviews uncovered further difficulties related to online assessments and the MMSU learning management system, mVLE. A primary concern was ensuring academic integrity during online assessments, as there were no reliable measures to prevent cheating. One of the respondents commented, *“Another significant concern is the compromised integrity of student learning within the mVLE. It was not easy to assess whether students had acquired the intended knowledge and skills, or whether they were simply answering the examinations and participating in learning activities. There were no means to verify whether students were cheating.”*

While some teachers required students to use two devices for monitoring, this approach was impractical for many due to financial constraints. Furthermore, navigating mVLE proved challenging for numerous teachers, often necessitating frequent assistance from IT support and tech-savvy colleagues. The platform’s complexity added to the struggles of online teaching, emphasizing the need for more comprehensive training and user-friendly digital tools to enhance teachers’ overall experience. These findings imply the urgent need for institutional actions to improve the effectiveness of online assessments. The challenges in maintaining academic integrity suggest the need for more effective assessment strategies, such as plagiarism detection software, randomized question pools, and alternative evaluation methods, including project-based assessments. Additionally, the difficulties in navigating mVLE underscore the need for targeted training programs tailored to teachers’ varying levels of digital proficiency. Simplifying the platform’s interface and providing ongoing technical support can also help mitigate these challenges and improve usability. These findings align with those of Gonzales et al. (2023), who reported that teachers frequently observed instances of student cheating during online exams. This growing concern has heightened the need for alternative assessment strategies, prompting educators to adopt more authentic and integrity-driven evaluation methods.

Summary of the Mean Scores of the Teachers’ Challenges in Online Teaching

The challenges faced by teachers in online teaching, along with their corresponding mean scores, are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Summary of Mean Scores of Teachers’ Challenges in Online Teaching

Variables	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. Connectivity and Technical	2.23	To a moderate extent
2. Accomplishing Teaching-Learning tasks	2.23	To a moderate extent
3. Class Interaction and Motivation	2.37	To a great extent
4. Personal and Health	1.92	To a moderate extent
Section Mean	1.92	To a moderate extent

The summary of mean scores in the table above highlights the varying levels of challenges faced by teachers in online teaching. Of the four categories, class interaction and motivation posed the most significant challenge ($m = 2.37$), which significantly challenged the teachers. Connectivity and technical issues ($m = 2.23$), as well as accomplishing teaching-learning tasks ($m = 2.23$), were also assessed as moderate challenges. On the other hand, personal and health issues recorded the lowest mean score ($m = 1.92$), yet still presented moderate challenges.

The teachers reinforced these findings during the interview. One of the respondents shared the following comment: *“One of the main challenges is dealing with internet glitches. Let us face it – technology, especially in the Philippines, is not perfect. There are times when the internet goes down or connectivity becomes problematic, which poses difficulties not only for me but also for my students. Another challenge in online teaching is the lack of class interaction. You cannot see your students’ facial expressions, making it harder to gauge their understanding. You do not immediately notice if they have questions or if they are staring blankly at the screen. This lack of real-time feedback is a significant hurdle in online teaching.”*

The results highlight a range of challenges in online teaching, with class interaction and student motivation being the most significant. These findings reveal the need for institutional support, professional development training, and technological advancements to enhance the effectiveness of online instruction. Clear guidelines and procedures for these interventions should be established and effectively communicated through well-defined policies to support teachers in implementing online teaching strategies. Comprehensive policy development is essential in helping them better understand their roles in facilitating and managing virtual classrooms. Moreover, well-structured policies can address teachers’ concerns and needs, ensuring they are equipped to deliver high-quality and practical instruction in an online setting.

The study's findings, which suggest that class interaction and motivation are the most significant challenges in online teaching, are supported by Rasheed et al. (2020). The study emphasized that encouraging students to engage in discussions and actively participate in online classes is significantly more difficult than in face-to-face learning. Limited opportunities for interaction make it challenging for teachers to understand students' behaviors, identify learning difficulties, and provide necessary support. Consequently, online teachers face additional challenges in tracking student progress, maintaining engagement with course materials, and enforcing discipline, further complicating the teaching process.

Moreover, these challenges arise due to the inherent limitations of digital learning environments. Teachers and students may not receive immediate responses and feedback, missing out on vital non-verbal cues that facilitate the spontaneous exchange of ideas, which are crucial for enhancing engagement and classroom rapport. Technological barriers also contribute to the issue. Unstable access to the internet, digital devices, and other learning platforms affects student participation. Additionally, some teachers were not adequately prepared or equipped with the technical skills necessary to sustain student motivation in online settings. Likewise, students often struggle with distractions at home, and this would affect their motivation and class interaction.

These findings have important implications for online teaching policy and practice. This implies a need for professional development and training for teachers that equip them with the technical skills and tools they need to establish interactive and student-centered online teaching-learning environments. Schools should consider utilizing digital platforms that facilitate dynamic student interaction through tools such as discussion boards, breakout rooms, and live polls. Additionally, to keep students motivated, online teaching policies should also encourage the use of student-centered tactics, such as gamified content, frequent check-ins, and individualized feedback. It is also necessary for schools to revisit curriculum design and consider modular content that promotes interactive learning opportunities among students.

These challenges and their implications are supported by existing literature. Douglas (2019) affirmed that studies revealed that online teaching often fails to provide opportunities for meaningful communication and interaction among students, which leads to poor motivation and interaction (Garrels & Zemliansky, 2022). Likewise, studies by Omar & Mohmad (2023) and Singh et al. (2022) confirmed that many teachers lacked the technical skills and digital pedagogy, which hindered their capacity to manage student active engagement online. These findings suggest the need for research-informed policies and approaches to online teaching that prioritize student motivation and class interaction. This has also been suggested in the study of Guaña-Moya et al. (2024), which emphasized the need for research-informed policies that focus on boosting student motivation and engagement, and addressing related issues like the digital divide and the need for teacher training to ensure effective online teaching implementation.

3.3 Teachers' Experiences in Online Teaching

Table 7 outlines the themes and initial codes identified through interviews concerning teachers' experiences in online teaching.

Table 7. Teachers' Experiences in Online Teaching

Themes Generated	Initial Codes
Utilizing Technology Applications	Uploading worksheets, videos, and modules Downloading student submissions Accessing Zoom and Google Meet for virtual classes Presenting PowerPoint slides and other visual materials
Developing Modules and Worksheets	Developing customized modules and worksheets Creating instructional materials tailored to student needs
Designing Interactive Activities	Implementing activities that foster student creativity Designing engaging and motivating learning tasks Facilitating collaborative learning experiences
Enhancing flexibility in Online Teaching	Managing tasks at their own pace Allocating time for teaching responsibilities
Administering Examinations and Generating scores in the mVLE	Administering online assessments with ease Reducing the time spent on grading and recording the test scores of students

Despite the challenges of online teaching, teachers had positive and meaningful experiences that encouraged productivity and innovation. These experiences enabled them to adopt new teaching methods and devise innovative solutions to enhance student learning. Based on interview responses, key themes that emerged include Utilizing Technology Applications, Developing Modules and Worksheets, Designing Interactive Activities, Administering Examinations, and Generating Scores in mVLE, the learning management system of MMSU.

Utilizing Technology Applications. As many teachers were required to use computers to prepare instructional materials, they developed essential digital skills and became more proficient in various online applications. One respondent admitted, *"I was able to develop my technology skills during online teaching. I learned to utilize a variety of digital tools and technology applications to support my teaching. This included exploring learning management systems, video conferencing platforms, interactive content creation tools, and assessment applications. I became more confident in integrating these technologies into my instructional practices, and this enhanced student engagement."*

Teachers learned to upload worksheets, activities, videos, and modules to platforms such as mVLE and Messenger (GC) while also downloading students' outputs for assessment. Additionally, they utilized online meeting platforms, such as Zoom and Google Meet, which enabled them to share PowerPoint presentations during meetings and class discussions. Some teachers admitted that they had never used these technologies before. However, the necessity of online teaching pushed them to adapt and learn new digital tools. This aligns with the findings of Coman et al. (2020), who noted that teachers during online teaching found innovative ways to improve their technological proficiency, making their lessons more engaging and interactive for students.

Developing Modules and Worksheets. Teachers were encouraged to develop instructional materials, including modules and worksheets, customized to meet their students' needs. One respondent shared, *"I was prompted to prepare instructional materials such as modules and worksheets to support my students, especially those who had irregular attendance. Initially, I found it quite challenging to develop modules, but through continuous practice, I was able to learn how to design them effectively. These materials helped students catch up on missed lessons and engage with the content at their own pace."*

Various challenges prevented many teachers from completing their lessons during online sessions. To address this issue, they created their instructional materials to ensure that students, particularly those unable to attend online classes, could still understand key concepts. Without these resources, students would have had limited learning opportunities.

To maintain the quality of the teaching resources developed, teachers researched module-writing techniques, analyzed sample materials, and critically reviewed existing modules before developing their own. Many found these self-made resources valuable not only for online instruction but also for face-to-face teaching, enhancing the overall learning experience for students.

Designing Interactive Activities. Due to low student participation in online discussions, teachers implemented innovative strategies to enhance engagement. They designed interactive activities that encouraged students to express their ideas and opinions. Activities included writing poems, creating slogans, participating in video discussions, and designing informational flyers and infographics, many of which were presented in class. Additionally, students participated in collaborative group activities, which fostered teamwork and communication. One respondent revealed, *"I often observed that my students were passive during discussions. It was difficult to gauge their engagement, especially since many were hesitant to turn on their cameras. This led me to design more interactive activities that would actively engage them in the learning process. For instance, I encouraged students to read their poems or creative outputs aloud during class, and this fostered participation and gave them a platform to express themselves more confidently."*

Research by Gonzales et al. (2023) similarly found that teachers incorporated various digital tools, such as Kahoot, Mentimeter, and online surveys, to boost interaction during synchronous classes. These strategies significantly improved student engagement, helping to overcome the challenges of online teaching and learning.

Enhancing Flexibility in Online Teaching. Online teaching provided teachers with greater flexibility in managing their classes and instructional activities. Unlike traditional face-to-face instruction, where fixed

schedules often limited their ability to plan lessons and assess student work, online teaching allowed teachers more control over their time. This flexibility enabled them to review and grade student outputs at their own pace while also converting teaching materials into digital formats. As a result, they could allocate time more effectively for preparing instructional resources, designing engaging learning activities, developing worksheets, and assessing student performance. One respondent admitted, *"With asynchronous classes, teaching became much more flexible. Learning materials were readily accessible, and I was able to manage multiple tasks simultaneously. For example, while students were engaging with the content, I could focus on preparing my lesson plans, developing teaching resources, and grading their outputs. It also allowed me to thoroughly evaluate their recorded audio and video performances without the pressure of real-time constraints."*

Beyond scheduling, this flexibility also enabled teachers to tailor their instructional approaches to meet the needs of individual students. They could upload recorded lectures, extend deadlines, and provide supplementary resources to support students facing connectivity issues or personal challenges. Also, online platforms enabled teachers to experiment with new digital tools and teaching strategies.

Administering Examinations and Generating Scores in mVLE. While uploading test items to mVLE required more time compared to preparing printed exams, conducting assessments became significantly easier. Teachers no longer had to supervise students during exams, and scoring was automated, which eliminated the need for manual grading. With students' scores instantly available on the platform, teachers save valuable time that would otherwise be spent checking individual test papers during face-to-face instruction.

The teachers recognized the benefits they gained from their online teaching experiences. This was reinforced during the interviews. One respondent shared, *"I gained experience with various online applications, which helped me prepare for potential online teaching in the future. I also experienced several benefits, like the convenience of generating student scores using platforms like mVLE and Google Quiz."*

Another respondent expressed enjoyment in online teaching and outlined the benefits she gained from the experience. She revealed, *"During my online teaching experience, I had several positive takeaways. I enhanced my knowledge of various technology applications that can be effectively used in the teaching and learning process. Conducting examinations became more efficient, eliminating the need for manual checking of individual answer sheets. Additionally, I explored alternative resources to engage with my students and discovered new mediums for delivering lectures and discussions."*

The teachers' experiences in using different applications for uploading resources, delivering online classes, and evaluating students demonstrate adaptability and digital skills. Creating modules and designing interactive activities demonstrates their commitment to enhancing student motivation and promoting active participation. Moreover, the adaptability of online teaching enabled teachers to handle their responsibilities more effectively, though it necessitated time management skills. Optimizing students through digital platforms like the mVLE reduces grading time, thereby enhancing efficiency. These experiences suggest the necessity for teacher training and departmental and institutional support to improve teachers' competencies and approaches to online teaching.

The results of this research align with the findings of Coman et al. (2020), who noted that during online teaching, teachers found innovative ways to enhance their technological proficiency, thereby making their lessons more engaging and interactive for students. Teachers learned to utilize digital tools, including video conferencing, learning management systems, and multimedia resources, to develop interactive lessons. Through the use of various applications and instructional methods, teachers enhanced student engagement and adapted their teaching approaches to suit the online setting. This illustrates the determination and flexibility of teachers in overcoming technological obstacles to guarantee meaningful learning experiences for their students.

Online teaching allowed teachers to adopt new teaching methods and develop creative strategies to enhance student learning. As they engaged with technology applications, their familiarity and confidence in using digital tools grew. Key themes from teachers' online experiences during the interviews, which include utilizing technology applications, developing modules and worksheets, designing interactive activities, administering examinations, and generating scores within the mVLE, demonstrate how teachers adapted their pedagogical strategies to meet learners' needs and suit the online environment. These experiences have important implications for online teaching policy and practice, as these suggest that schools should invest in continuous, hands-on

training to enrich teachers' technological knowledge and skills, promote the design of modular and activity-based content, and create policies and practices that support instructional innovation. These results are consistent with previous research, specifically the TPACK framework proposed by Mishra & Koehler (2006), which emphasizes the integration of pedagogy, content knowledge, and technology for effective instruction.

4.0 Conclusion

The findings of this study unveil critical evidence for the development of clear, targeted, and effective policies for online teaching. The challenges faced by teachers, which include technical difficulties, student disengagement, difficulties in accomplishing tasks, and personal stress, underscore the need for crafting responsive policies that address these concrete issues through systemic interventions. For instance, the widespread reporting of technical barriers directly supports the implementation of policies on internet infrastructure upgrades and robust IT support systems. Likewise, concerns about student disengagement and participation underscore the need for policies that mandate the use of interactive digital tools, ongoing student monitoring mechanisms, and training in digital pedagogy for teachers. Additionally, the findings related to accomplishing teaching-learning tasks and achieving work-life balance underscore the importance of institutional guidelines that provide flexible work schedules and mental health support.

Thus, this study proposes five foundational areas for policy formulation to enhance its effectiveness: improving internet accessibility, establishing a robust IT support system, preparing teachers for online instruction, implementing a system to monitor student participation, and promoting a healthy work-life balance for teachers. These proposed areas are grounded in the actual experiences of teachers and aim to create a more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable online learning environment. While these recommendations were developed within the context of the EEd department of MMSU, their relevance extends to other educational institutions seeking to strengthen their online teaching practices. By drawing on authentic teaching experiences, the study underscores the importance of evidence-based and context-specific policies in shaping effective online teaching.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Madeline T. Fernando was responsible for the overall conceptualization and design of the study. She prepared the research instruments and communication letters and took the lead in securing ethical clearance from the University Research Ethics Review Board (URERB) of MMSU. She also monitored the data collection process, as well as the analysis and interpretation of the data. In addition, she prepared both the capsule and detailed research proposals, the terminal report, and refined the final manuscript for publication. Estrella B. Luis managed the distribution and administration of the survey questionnaires to the participants, while Janeth M. Luis conducted in-depth interviews with selected participants.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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