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Teachers' Challenging Experiences in Home Visitation During the New Normal Education: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract. Home visits are intended to decrease the reading gap, improve parenting skills, foster parent-child contact and involvement, boost students' school preparedness and achievement, and advance literacy. The home visitation program was the only option for the teachers to validate their learners' academic performance during the Modular Distance Learning in the new normal education. This study explored the challenges that public elementary school teachers encountered in home visitation during the new normal education in Jimenez District, Division of Misamis Occidental. A phenomenological approach was utilized as a research design, with nine public elementary school teachers as participants in the study. They were selected through purposive sampling. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to gather the data from the participants. The responses were analyzed using Moustakas' method of data analysis. Results generated the following themes: threats to one's security and safety, inadequacies of interpersonal connections among teachers, parents, and learners, conflict of other school-related activities and teachers' coping strategies. The study showed that teachers experienced different challenges in home visitation during the new normal education. When teachers leave the confines of the school campus to provide services in locations other than where they are employed, they expose themselves to a significant risk and face potential threats to their safety and security. When students and their parents are absent during a home visit, it can be difficult for teachers to administer assessments or validate student work. Teachers also find that overlapping school activities and home visitation make for an exhausting experience. However, the study showed that despite the challenges the teachers have encountered, they remain diligent and responsive to the needs of their learners. Teachers' coping strategies have assisted them in remaining optimistic and flexible in facing different challenges. The buddy system, total health, and time management among teachers are recommended in this study.

Keywords: Teachers' challenging experiences, Home visitation, New normal education, Qualitative approach.

1.0 Introduction

Home is the safest place to stay while the pandemic is at the height of its strike because no absolute cure has been discovered yet. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes it brought to learners, the school must intensify the role of the family as learning facilitators at home to ensure the continuity of learning (Gayatri & Irawaty, 2022). Parents are the immediate persons that learners can call for help, while teachers cannot leave their learners alone in answering their modules and LAS (Balgos & Villarente, 2022). Home visitation as an intervention is urgently needed to alleviate the disparity in status among students regarding adequate learning resources. Home visitations are designed and implemented to help close the reading gap, increase parenting knowledge, parent-child interaction, & involvement, increases school readiness & success, and promote literacy. Home

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visitation is the effort made by the teacher to consistently visit the student at home and spare a moment to conduct ample teaching time and follow-ups of their performance. (Malabarbas et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the study by Bayucca (2021) and (Villaruz et al., 2022) discovered obstacles in implementing modular distance education. These disadvantages include greater self-discipline and self-motivation required for pupils, increased preparation time and lack of concrete teacher rewards, and more excellent administrative resources needed to track students and operate multiple modules (Talimodao & Madrigal, 2021). In implementing the home visit at SD Muhida, there were also several obstacles encountered, including the lack of follow-up in home visit activities, the teacher does not support for the home visit activities, lack of support from parents, and less able to adjust the time (Nurdyansyah, & Nyong, 2020). Several school systems implement teacher home visit programs to foster ties with parents and improve in-school parent involvement, raising student achievement. (Wright et al., 2018).

Furthermore, authentic assessments and timely feedback are essential to learning (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). As stipulated in DepEd Order No. 31, series 2020, teachers need to be creative and flexible in assessing student learning while still adhering to the principles of quality assessment practice. As Modular Distance Learning began, the teachers questioned the genuineness and accuracy of the responses provided by their students (Luaña, 2021). The home visitation program was the only option for the teachers to validate their learners' academic performance. The study of Rodado, 2021 indicates that home visitation could potentially enhance the students' reading performance. Their students' reading habits while at home is a source of concern for the teachers. Mukanova & Eftimova (2021) state that prolonged social isolation and lack of contact cause an imbalance in children's emotional and mental states.

Therefore, although numerous studies have shown benefits for both students and parents when teacher home visit programs have been implemented, fewer studies have specifically examined the challenges teachers face while performing home visits as a part of the new normal education. Jimenez District implemented the home visitation program as prescribed by the DepEd. However, the implementation of this program resulted in varying reactions from teachers. Hence, this qualitative study was conducted to explore the challenging experiences that elementary school teachers faced at Jimenez District, Division of Misamis Occidental, in home visitation during the new normal education and develop practical methods or strategies and relevant programs to address the instructional challenges.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative approach using Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is the study of conscious knowledge related to the expression of what an individual has perceived, sensed, and known as a result of their experience (Moustakas, 1994). In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher is given the ability to comprehend the significance of the meanings that the participants attach to their experiences of an identifiable occurrence (Moustakas, 1994). A framework for qualitative research served as the basis for the statements reported in this study. The researcher can comprehend the significance of the participants' experiences by analyzing the descriptions. The transcendental phenomenology by Moustakas used to describe the challenges and to investigate the difficulties faced by the elementary school teachers of Jimenez District during the implementation of the new normal education's home visitation program.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was carried out in the District of Jimenez, Division of Misamis Occidental. The first participating school is 7 kilometers away from the town proper. It has five teachers in the elementary department and only three in the junior high department. Since it was only established in 2020 as an integrated school, it has only a total learner population of 142 for this school year from Kindergarten to Grade 8. The second participating school is 8.5 kilometers from the town and part of the ancestral domain of Jimenez. It has five elementary teaching personnel with 85 enrollees from Kindergarten to Grade 6.

2.3 Research Participants

The study participants were nine (9) public elementary school teachers Jimenez District, Division of Misamis Occidental. They were selected through purposive sampling. The following were the criteria in the selection of the participants: (1) currently working as a public elementary teacher in Jimenez District, (2) has at least 3 years in service in the public school, (3) has currently handling monograde classes and (4) is willing to participate in this research study.

2.4 Research Instrument

This study used the researcher-made interview guide to elicit data from the participants. The interview guide included the opening questions, core questions, and closing questions. The questions focused on the challenges the public elementary school teachers encountered at Jimenez District in conducting home visitation during the new normal education. In ensuring the interview guide's validity and reliability, the researcher interviewed three participants who were not included in the final data gathering. Based on the responses, questions that were vague or ambiguous were revised.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

This study used a face-to-face interview format to add the benefit of clarifying questions, asking further probing questions, and observing non-verbal communication. During the interview, the health protocols prescribed by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for COVID-19, like wearing of face mask and social distancing, were strictly followed. Moreover, the interview was digitally recorded. The researcher transcribed the responses of the participants. The transcriptions were examined, and significant statements from each participant were clustered into themes.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This research study followed ethical guidelines. Both verbally and through a consent letter, the participants were made aware of the purpose of the study. Additionally, they were made aware that their participation was optional and that they might end the interview without providing a reason. Their refusal to participate has no financial cost or loss of benefits, and providing their signed consent does not signify a waiver of any future legal claims, rights, or remedies related to this study. The "Data Privacy Act of 2012," Republic Act No. 10173, was followed by the researcher in all respects. The Ethics Board approved all ethical considerations.

Participants are advised that their materials would be kept strictly confidential and utilized to complete this study. In the research, not a single participant's name was divulged. After the conclusion of the research project, all of the materials were disposed of.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The methodologies developed by Moustakas were utilized in analyzing the transcripts of all participants obtained through the interviews. The responses of the participants in terms of the challenges they encountered during the conduct of home visitation in the new normal education yielded the following themes:

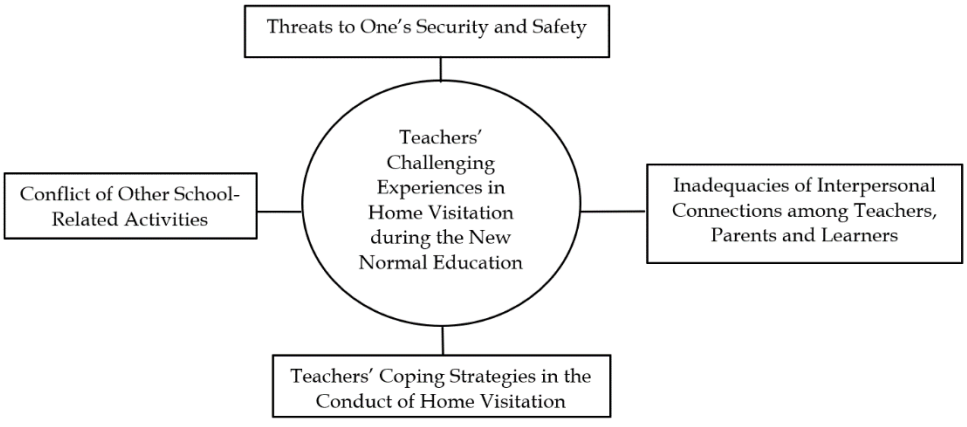

Figure 1. Schematic diagram of the study

3.1 Conflict of Other School-Related Activities

The participants need help conducting home visitation among their learners because of the conflict with other school-related activities they must attend. In addition, teachers are already exhausted with numerous tasks inside the classroom, such as printing and binding Self-Instructional Materials (SIMs), checking submitted Learning Activity Sheets (LAS), recording learners' scores, attending webinars or virtual meetings, and presenting online reports. These experiences were mentioned in the following interview responses:

"The overlapping of school activities such as checking submitted outputs, recording and computing learners' scores, attending webinars, urgent meetings, and submitting reports have added challenges to me in conducting home visitation. I needed to rearrange the schedule and inform the parents about the sudden change of plans." (P4)

"Another challenge I have encountered was the conflict of time. There were instances when our school principal called an urgent meeting in the school in which I had a schedule for home visitation. Again, I have to reschedule the visit and inform the parents about it. Honestly, home visitation during the pandemic is tiresome because I visited all of my 21 grade 1 learners. Unlike before the pandemic, I only visited Learners at Risk of Dropping out (LARDO). But in today's new normal education, home visitation was time-consuming because I allotted only one week for home visitation purposes. I have sacrificed my weekend by going to school to print the SIM (Self- Instructional Materials) and LAS (Learning Activity Sheets) for all my learners." (P2)

"Unlike before the pandemic, I only visited a maximum of 3 pupils who were at risk of dropping out. But now, in the absence of face-to-face classes, I needed to visit all of them to validate their performances. It was exhausting, especially when I needed to sacrifice my weekend in printing and to bind the SIMs for distribution." (P5)

Aside from teaching, teachers have other ancillary services in the school. One of the participants was a Teacher-In-Charge of the school, making it difficult for her to balance between administrative works and teacher-related activities. These experiences were mentioned in the following interview responses:

"In addition, since I am the ICT Coordinator of our school, there were instances when I had to submit urgent online reports as soon as possible. So, I could not visit the learner during that time. Rescheduling visits due to conflicts with other school-related activities was challenging." (P1)

"Honesty, home visitation was very tiresome on my part as the Teacher-In-Charge of Matugas Alto ES. I was already preoccupied with so much work at home and in school. Therefore, I spent sleepless nights and sacrificed my weekends to comply with all the academic and administrative tasks in school." (P7)

"I felt exhausted during home visits because I was the over-all chairperson for the graduation and chairman for school checking committee. I was confused between preparing the program, decorations, and school forms for graduation, or I would continue visiting my unvisited learners in their homes. There were instances when our school principal called emergency meetings that fell on my home visit schedule. It was frustrating that I needed to cancel all the scheduled visits and contact the parents about the sudden change." (P8)

The amount of teacher burnout is significantly influenced by workload. Teachers' productivity is also impacted by their workload (Jumoad et. al., 2021). Teachers are juggling various responsibilities at home and at school, so they have a lot on their minds. In the new normal education, teachers found obstacles and difficulties when making home visits. David Perkins' (2007) Theory of Difficulty was considered adequate by the researcher. His theory demonstrates how teachers respond appropriately to persistent problems in the classroom. As individuals, teachers can focus and prioritize tasks to keep high personal productivity levels at work (Bartlett, 2021). Each of us has many things to do daily, depending on how we prioritize them. As a result, it will help us improve our work quality. According to the responses, teachers find that overlapping school activities and home visitation makes for an exhausting experience. For example, when not properly managed, activities such as printing, binding, and packing of Self-Instructional Materials (SIMs), facilitating the distribution and retrieval of SIMs, checking Learning Activity Sheets (LAS), validating learners' portfolios, and computing grades can lead to conflicts about time. In addition, when the responsibility of making home visits was added to teachers' already heavy workload, the situation became more difficult for them.

3.2 Threats to One's Security and Safety

One of the common problems encountered by teachers during the home visitation is the presence of potentially dangerous threats to their security and safety. When teachers leave the confines of their working stations, their comfort, safety and health are put into risk. Experiencing dangerous situations while traveling to unfamiliar roads makes home visitation challenging for them.

Health Problems among Teachers and Learners. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the health of teachers and learners. Four of the teacher-participants are experiencing COVID-19-related symptoms like fever, cough, cold, and headache. Considering their unhealthy conditions, they were advised to work from home and are restricted from performing activities outside their homes. Because of this, teachers cannot perform the task of visiting their learners for validation. This claim is supported by the participants' responses:

"There was also a time when I suffered from those COVID 19 – related symptoms. It was challenging because I needed to rest and postponed all the scheduled visits." (P2)

"Another challenging experience I encountered during home visitation was when I suffered COVID–19–related symptoms such as fever, cough, and cold. It was challenging because I needed to cancel the scheduled visits for that particular date and time." (P5) There were also instances when I suffered from those COVID 19 – related symptoms. It was challenging because I needed to rest and cancel all the scheduled visits." (P7)

"The occurrence of COVID-19-related symptoms adds a more challenging experience for my learners and me. (P8)

There were some instances that children were not feeling well due to COVID-19-related symptoms, and not the teacher herself. Children who suffer from illnesses cannot correctly execute a given activity and are expected to take rest and stay at home. That is why the purpose of home visitation is not carried out by the three participants because of the occurrence of COVID-19-related symptoms among their learners. The following statements of the participants reinforced these claims during the interview*:*

"The most challenging part of conducting home visitation was the incident of COVID–19–related symptoms among my learners. Three of my learners suffered from headaches, cough, runny nose, fever, and cold during their schedule for home visitation. I was informed late about their health issues, so I could not validate them. (P2)

"The challenging part of conducting home visitation was the occurrence of COVID–19–related symptoms among my learners. Five suffered from cough, runny nose, fever, and colds during their scheduled visits. Before I knew about their health issues, I had already arrived in their respective homes. I was informed late, and visiting their homes was a waste of time because I could not perform my purpose in visiting them. (P7)

"Another parent called me and requested to reschedule her son's home visitation for the following week due to a cough and fever." (P8)

It is important to note that the impact of these health problems may be disproportionately felt by teachers and learners from marginalized communities, who may face additional barriers to accessing healthcare and other resources. Addressing these health problems will require a comprehensive approach that includes addressing the root causes of health disparities and providing support and resources to promote physical and mental well-being among teachers and learners. Health issues among teachers and learners was under DOH AO No. 2020-0015 and DepEd Order No. 14, series of 2020, ensuring that symptomatic individuals be required to stay at home and seek medical attention. For this reason, teachers who suffer COVID 19- related symptoms find difficulty in performing their tasks during home visitation.

Visiting Alone. Most participants rely on their husbands as their drivers and companion in going to far-flung and hard-to-reach home visitation destinations. It is difficult for them to conduct home visitation without their husband, for they do not know how to drive. They are also afraid of being alone in the streets. Since teachers have different schedules for home visitation in their respective classes, it is expected that teachers go by themselves and not in pairs or groups. The following statements of the participants reinforced these claims during the interview:

"One of the challenges I encountered during home visitation was that I needed a companion while going to the houses of my learners. Some of my learners' homes are far from the school. I needed to ride our motorcycle, and my husband was the driver. If my husband had other important things to do, I could not visit my learners far from the school." (P2)

"The challenging part of conducting home visitation was to do it alone. Honestly, I have not visited all of my learners' homes because some are far from the school. My husband was preoccupied with important things, so he could not drive me from one home to another. I only visited those learners who reside near the school." (P3)

"Home visitation during the new normal education was quite challenging. I needed to ask my husband to accompany me during visits. Some of my learners' houses were far from the school. I needed to ride a motorcycle to reach distant places. My husband was unavailable sometimes, so I canceled the scheduled visits that day." (P4)

The desire of teachers to conduct home visitations is sometimes thwarted by the presence of potentially hazardous conditions when traveling to the residences of some students. In addition, when teachers leave the confines of the school campus to provide services in locations other than where they are employed, they expose themselves to a significant risk. Therefore, despite the pandemic, maintaining their responsibilities to ensure that education can continue is a top priority for them, along with ensuring their safety. Visiting homes alone during home visits of teachers ultimately depends on a variety of factors, such as the culture of the community, the perceived safety of the area, and the level of trust established between the teacher and the family. It is important for teachers to assess their comfort level with visiting homes alone and to take steps to prioritize their safety.

Slippery Road. Visiting homes during inclement weather, such as on a slippery road, presented a variety of challenges for teachers. Some potential challenges include increased risk of accidents or injuries due to slippery road conditions, unpredictable weather conditions, which can impact the teacher's ability to conduct the visit as planned, difficulty carrying materials or equipment due to slippery conditions; and increased stress and anxiety related to navigating difficult driving conditions. In the study, during rainy days, some roads leading to the learners' houses are not passable by motorcycles. Teachers must walk on slippery, muddy roads just to reach to their destinations. These were revealed in the answers of the participants:

"Some roads going to my learners' houses were not cemented and were very slippery and muddy during the rainy season. So, I walked because I was afraid of falling from the motorcycle. I postponed the home visitation during heavy rains and stayed at the school." (P2)

"Another challenging experience during home visitation was walking on a very slippery and muddy road on rainy days. I got stranded in one of my pupil's houses because of the rain and went home late." (P4)

"The challenging part of conducting home visitation was that some of my learners reside at Purok 7, the farthest purok in the barangay. It took me about 45 minutes to walk to reach their homes because the roads were not accessible by motorcycles. The rainy season made home visitation a challenging experience. I needed to walk on slippery and muddy roads, got wet, and got stranded due to heavy rainfall. Sometimes, I cancelled the visits and rescheduled them when the weather was fine. (P6)

"The challenge I encountered during home visitation was that some roads going to my learners' homes were difficult to cross during rainy days. It was very muddy and slippery." (P7)

"One of the challenges I encountered during home visitation was a lack of transportation to ride from the school to the home of my learners. I must walk at least 2 kilometers to reach their homes. Most of my learners live kilometers from the school, and some were not passable by vehicles during the rainy season." (P9)

It is important for teachers to be prepared for these challenges and to take steps to prioritize their safety during home visits on slippery roads. This may involve rescheduling or cancelling visits if conditions are deemed unsafe or taking extra precautions to ensure safe driving and navigation during inclement weather. By planning and communicating clearly with families, teachers can help to minimize the impact of these challenges and ensure that home visits are a productive and positive experience for all involved.

Presence of Stray Animals. There are also threatening situations when stray dogs run and bark in the streets, frightening the teachers. The following statements of the participants supported these claims during the interview: *"Also, some homeowners did not tie their dogs, and I was scared of being bitten by stray dogs while going to unfamiliar places." (P4)*

"I once had a memorable experience when I conducted a home visitation, and a dog nearly bit me along the way. I did not know who owned the dog because I was walking towards my learner's house when a big stray dog suddenly tried jumping over me to bite me." (P9)

Maintaining one's health is one of the most important factors to consider to successfully carry out one's obligations and responsibilities as a teacher. Supporting teachers' well-being is critical to prevent significant adverse consequences for teachers, their students, and the education system (Baker et al., 2021). In addition, studies have shown that when children are happy and healthy, they have better academic performance. The health of all citizens, past, present, and future, is the government's number one concern. When COVID-19-related symptoms were becoming evident, it makes it more difficult for the teacher and learner to interact during home visits. The cancellation of the planned visits due to poor health conditions experienced by the teacher and the learner presented a challenge to the teachers' working attitude (Glazzard & Rose, 2020). The interview findings showed that teachers need help getting in touch with their pupils who live in isolated areas where the roads are inaccessible to motorcycles. Both participating schools are part of the ancestral territory of Jimenez Municipality. Most of the people who live in the barangay are Subanen and reside in remote and isolated parts of the community. Teachers are understandably nervous about going on home visits by themselves. They require a partner or companion's assistance to travel from one home to another.

3.3 Inadequacies of Interpersonal Connections among Teachers, Parents, and Learners

DepEd Order No. 31, series of 2020, states that "the responsibility for assessment and feedback should be shared among learners, their families, and their respective teachers." When students and their parents are absent during a home visit, it can be difficult for teachers to administer assessments or validate student work among the students in the new normal platform. Learners and their parents need to be available during home visits to make progress toward achieving the goals and standards designed for new normal education.

Unavailability of Parents and Learners. The participants find it challenging to conduct home visitation when parents and learners are unavailable during visits. Parents are busy working on their farms or in government or private workplaces. Other parents should have noticed the scheduled date and time for home visitation. Instead, they are preoccupied with other appointments, making the teacher and parent interaction during visits become their less priority. There are instances that, due to a change of plans, some parents are not informed. Thus, they had already left their house before the teachers' arrival. Some children are not in their respective homes during visits. They play basketball or other games in the neighboring houses. Others are in the market with their parents. The responses of the participants supported these during the interview:

"Also, there was a time when I arrived at one of my learners' houses; his parents were not around. They forgot about the scheduled home visit date and time. Sometimes, the child was not at home but enjoyed playing on the basketball court with their neighbors. The parents hurriedly called their son when they saw me, and I waited for a few minutes." (P1)

"In addition, some parents were unavailable during the visit. It would be better if parents were there during the visit so that I could give some pointers and additional reading materials to the learners with the assistance of their parents at home." (P2)

"Some parents' contact numbers were out of coverage area and were difficult to reach for calls informing the change of plans. Otherwise, I did not notify some parents, so they went somewhere, and only their kids were at home during my visit. I wanted the parents to be around during my visit so that I could explain their children's reading level and ask them questions about their children's learning process at home during a pandemic." (P3)

"There were also some instances when parents were not around during my visit because of work on their farm, and only their elder siblings were there. It would have been good if I could talk to the parents and ask some queries about their child's learning habits at home. In that case, I would reschedule another visit whenever their parents were available."(P5)

"Another problem I encountered was the unavailability of parents at their respective homes because of work in the office or on the farm. It would be good if I could personally talk to the parents of my learners during the visit so that I could give them guidance or assistance on how they could help their children learn at home." (P7)

"Without communication devices, I failed to inform some parents about the sudden schedule changes; therefore, they and their children were unavailable during my visit because they went to the market." (P9)

The pandemic has forged a strong connection between teachers and parents than ever before. The homeschooling requires parents to support the students' learning academically and economically (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). The study of Doyle, 2020 revealed that parenting is hard, and in the current COVID-19 environment, it has become even harder. Families are spending a relatively small proportion of their day engaged in home schooling. While all families are somewhat worried about home schooling, higher educated parents are also experiencing a greater loss in productively. Balancing responsibility between their demands of work and children's needs is the most dominant experience encountered by parents (Munastiwi & Puryono, 2021). Many countries implement the "learning from home" policy to avoid contact with the infected people. Unfortunately, the "learning from home" activity requires parents to assist their children. Therefore, they need to stay at home or work from home. Unfortunately, not every job can be done from home. Therefore, parents cannot assist their children during the modular distance learning.

Difficulty in Dealing with the Learners. Another challenging experience teacher face in conducting home visitation is the learners' adverse reactions to visits. School-aged children in the Key Stage 1 (Kinder-Grade 3) are hesitant to communicate with the teachers they have seen for the first time. Teachers need to win their trust first before proceeding to their goal. These experiences were mentioned in the following interview responses:

"One of the challenges that I encountered during home visitation was that I had to establish rapport with my learners. Building rapport was challenging on my part because they had not seen me before. It was their first time seeing me, and so was I. It took longer before I could proceed to my purpose since I had to get their trust first. Some of them did not want to go near me. Others did not want to answer my queries." (P1)

"One of the challenges I have encountered was some of the learners were too shy to speak to me. I needed to get their trust before proceeding with our reading activity." (P2)

"Since I was dealing with the little ones, I had difficulty winning their trust on our first meeting. Two of my learners did not want to show up, even to say hello. They were too shy and afraid to answer some questions about themselves. So, I rescheduled them and did not force them to cooperate." (P9)

Another major concern is the length of isolation many children have had to endure since the pandemic began and what effects it might have on their ability to socialize. The school, for many children, is the agent for forming their social connections as well as where early social development occurs (Hoofman & Secord, 2021). Other learners are anxious during the validation of scores and reading assessment, especially those struggling readers. Their poor participation caused delays in achieving the purpose of home visitation. Teachers found it very challenging when they wasted their time during validation of their learners' performance due to limited interactions. The responses of the participants supported these during the interview:

"One of the challenges I encountered during home visitation was the unwillingness of some learners to face me, especially those who were poor in reading comprehension. They had a fear of face-to-face validation because they knew to themselves their weaknesses." (P7)

"There was a time that one of my learners ran away as soon as he saw me approaching his home. His parents followed him, but still, he was not in the mood to participate. So, I rescheduled him for another day and promised to bring him snacks the next time we met." (P8)

"Another challenging part of conducting home visitation was when some learners did not want to speak out when asked about the lesson or did not want to participate in the activity. Their poor participation caused delays in performing my goal since I needed to set their moods before properly conducting my purpose." (P5)

Given the physical separation between the teacher and the students, the student should be independent in every educational activity assigned to him. The study by Pinquart & Ebeling (2020) concluded that parents should communicate positive educational expectations to their children. The transmission of positive expectations to the offspring and the encouragement of academic engagement is more effective in realizing parental expectations. Studies show that parental involvement is associated with student's educational outcomes. Students' attitudes and aspirations mediate the associations between parental involvement and academic achievement (Otani, 2020). If students and their parents are not present in the homes being visited by teachers, the teachers will be unable to accomplish the goals they set for the visits.

According to the interview findings, teachers take more time to reschedule visits when students and their parents are unavailable during the designated period. When students or their parents do not show up at the selected date and time, it can be difficult for teachers to do their jobs because it requires them to give up another day to go back for the students or their parents. According to the findings of the research conducted by Conto et al. in 2020, it is essential for remote learning to be effectively delivered and taken up for there to be consistent communication between teachers, communities, and caregivers. As a result, the fact that students and their parents are absent during home visits makes it more difficult to maintain open lines of communication. DepEd Order No. 31 s. 2020, also known as Interim Guidelines for Assessment and Grading in Light of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan, stipulates that the bases of the learners' grades only include written works and performance tasks. Teachers shall administer written works and performance tasks "to assess the content and performance standards that describe the knowledge, abilities, and skills that learners are expected to demonstrate." (Department of Education, 2020: p. 6). However, teachers find assessing the learner's performance difficult when some are afraid or too shy to speak out or participate during validation. The challenge is on the teachers' part on how to make friends with the learners to make them feel secure, comfortable, and understood, especially the Key Stage 1 learners from Kindergarten to Grade 3. The interview findings indicated that teachers encountered challenges when attempting to administer assessments to students who did not wish to participate in them, particularly students in the Key Stage 1 (which spans kindergarten through third grade). During the pandemic, the research conducted by Munastiwi & Puryono (2021) revealed that many kindergarten management boards needed help to fulfill planned education schedules and had a low success rate in achieving objective targets. In addition, the impressions students form during the first meeting can affect their satisfaction with their learning and performance (Lane et al., 2021). According to Glazier (2021), human connection is at the core of building rapport. As a result, developing a good rapport with a student during a home visit by a teacher is essential to achieving fruitful interaction between the two.

3.4 Teachers' Coping Strategies

The positive well-being of the participants aids in overcoming the challenges of the new normal education (De Vera, 2020). Despite the challenges teachers have encountered in conducting home visitation during the new normal education, they remain diligent and responsive to the needs of their learners. As part of their coping strategies, teachers ask for help from the parents for support through open communication. The following served as a testimony of the participants:

"In coping these challenges, I asked the parents to help me build rapport with their son or daughter so that the next visit would be easier for their child and me. To maximize the time during visits, I have prepared learning activity sheets for them to answer. During the conflict of other activities, I texted their parents about the new schedule and posted a notice in our group chat. To maintain social distancing, I asked the learners to make their voices louder."(P1)

"In coping with those challenges, I requested the parents for their support in supervising their children's learning process at home. I managed the rescheduling of visits by contacting the parents and being flexible enough to the unforeseen circumstances." (P2)

"I requested the parents to co-monitor and co-supervise their children's learning at home, especially their reading habits." (P4)

Accepting the challenges, enjoying and doing work one at a time, and looking at the welfare of their students made the participants stay positive, flexible and adaptive to change. Having a positive outlook and a healthy

lifestyle enables teachers to accomplish their duties and responsibilities despite the challenges of these trying times (Caraan, 2022). These experiences were mentioned in the following interview responses:

"One of my coping strategies was utilizing the purok centers as our meeting place. Also, asking for the support of the parents in overseeing their children's learning performance in all subjects helped make home visitation easier." (P3)

"I coped with these challenges by being flexible enough for any unexpected circumstances. Also, I asked my husband a week before the scheduled visits so he could share his time in accompanying me." (P4)

"In coping with the mentioned challenges I encountered in conducting home visitation, I taught myself to adapt to changes to think of better solutions quickly. For example, during rainy seasons, I needed to inform the parents about the postponement of visits to avoid conflict with their other activities at work. As to reaching distant homes, I walked early to arrive on time."(P6)

"The ways I did to cope with the different challenges I encountered were the following: wearing rain boots and bringing an umbrella during the rainy season; making changes of schedules based on the availability of pupils or parents; communicating regularly with the parents about their issues and concerns; making an alternative agreement to those learners suffering from COVID 19 – related symptoms; making myself physically fit and healthy always."(P7)

"I always think positively and never lose hope when coping with my challenges. Even with how complicated the situation was, I would never give up. I would revisit my learners until I could fulfill my purpose."(P9)

The findings of the study showed that the teachers' coping strategies have assisted them in remaining optimistic and flexible in the face of the challenges they encountered while conducting home visits. To be able to teach effectively, one must possess the necessary skills and capacities, including the capacity to adapt to changing environments, while also maintaining communication and effectively engaging with learners. These are all critical factors (Colclasure et al., 2021). The degree to which educators believe they can accomplish their professional goals has a significant bearing on key academic outcomes. Employees who have confidence in their own abilities view problems and emergencies as challenges to be overcome (Cahapay et al., 2021). According to Albert Bandura's (1977) Theory of Self Efficacy, as it relates to instruction, teachers encounter numerous obstacles as they try to implement the home visitation program in the new normal education. Teachers reported several work-related stress triggers including busy times of the year, such as assessment periods, the pressure of extra curricula activities, and keeping up with the pace of change (Glazzard & Rose, 2020). Bandura's research, however, indicated that efficacy expectation is the mechanism through which changes in self-efficacy may be identified, and efficacy expectation was demonstrated to impact results.

4.0 Conclusion

The challenges did public elementary school teachers encounter in home visitation during the new normal education were the following: (1) Threats to One's Security and Safety. The cancellation of the planned visits due to poor health conditions experienced by the teacher and the learner presented a challenge to the teachers' working attitude. When teachers leave the confines of the school campus to provide services in locations other than where they are employed, they expose themselves to a significant risk; (2) Inadequacies of Interpersonal Connections among Teachers, Parents and Learners. The interview findings indicated that teachers encountered challenges when attempting to administer assessments to students who did not wish to participate in them, particularly students in the Key Stage 1. When students and their parents are absent during a home visit, it can be difficult for teachers to administer assessments or validate student work among the students in the new normal platform; and (3) Conflict of Other School-Related Activities. According to the responses, teachers find that overlapping school activities and home visitation makes for an exhausting experience. When the responsibility of making home visits was added to teachers' already heavy workload, the situation became more difficult for them. However, teachers cope with the different challenges they have encountered during home visitation by asking help from the parents for support through open communication. Accepting the challenges, enjoying and doing work one at a time, and looking at the welfare of their students made the participants stay positive, flexible and adaptive to change. Having a positive outlook and a healthy lifestyle enables teachers to accomplish their duties and responsibilities despite the challenges of these trying times.

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