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Notes of Digital Refugees: Understanding the Plight of Senior Faculty in Online Teaching

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Abstract. This study looks at the significant difficulties faced by senior faculty members who are used to teaching in a traditional classroom setting against the increasing trend toward distance learning. By using qualitative research methods, including a phenomenological lens and thematic analysis, the study revealed a wide range of obstacles that senior teachers attempt to overcome. These include issues with maintaining academic integrity, classroom management, and internet use. Financial difficulties and a noticeable lack of computer literacy are personal issues. Senior faculty members emotionally show disappointment and unhappiness during this change. The study recognizes the declining efficacy of senior teachers in online learning environments and emphasizes the necessity of specialized training programs and strong support structures. It promotes the creation of institutional frameworks designed to improve faculty well-being in light of the changing environment.

Keywords: digital refugees; nearly-retiring teachers; online teaching

1. Introduction

News reports on the pandemic emphasize its broad impact on people's lives. An article describes it as a health crisis and an unprecedented socio-economic one (undp.org), affecting everyone regardless of nationality, education, income, or gender. Countries globally prioritize mitigating its effects across various sectors, including health, economy, politics, and education (Osman, 2020; Schleicher, 2020).

The pandemic is the most significant disruption to global education, impacting about 1.6 billion learners across 200+ countries. It has caused a substantial interruption in student learning, prompting changes in the teaching process, particularly in teacher-student interactions (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2020; Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020; Coman et al., 2020). The shift to online teaching has affected

students' social lives, learning conditions, parental productivity, and teaching strategies (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020).

To reach a wider population of learners, instructional packages, including printouts and online instructional resources, were introduced as part of each school's effort to use various tools and methods to support learning (Schleicher & Reimers, 2020).

In situations with limited face-to-face interaction, e-learning tools support learning (Subedi et al., 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2020). These tools provide students flexibility in what, when, where, and how they learn, breaking the constraints of time and geography. Technology allows access to diverse non-textbook resources, and intelligent interactive systems enhance science teaching by catering to individualized interests. Virtual labs, including experiments, teach the entire process of planning, execution, and learning (oecd.org, 2020).

However, the sudden shift to distance and online teaching emphasized the call to strengthen one's skill in the use of technology. Classes are characterized by using the internet and various technologies to develop educational materials, facilitate the delivery of instruction, and manage educational programs (Fry, 2001; Mean et al., 2009).

The transition from traditional face-to-face to online learning emerged as a challenge for educators and learners. Moreover, there is extensive research on online learning (Anderson, 2004; Scherer et al., 2021; Moore et al., 2011; Singh & Thurman, 2019) but are primarily centered on students' experiences (Lemay et al., 2021; Yates et al., 2021) while those of the teachers are mostly left out (cf. Bruggeman et al., 2021).

The pandemic led to studies on how teachers and students adjust, but not how nearly-retiring teachers cope with technology in their classroom, especially considering today's context of online learning (Mendoza, 2018; Richards, 2012; Yu, 2017). Furthermore, nearly-retiring teachers may need more access to professional development opportunities in educational technology, which can impede their capacity to adapt to online teaching.

Kalinga State University, the lone higher education institution in the Kalinga Province, is impacted by the health crisis and must adjust to distant learning by making educational technology innovations. Being the only state university in the place, KSU has an estimated 8,000 students from different municipalities and nearby provinces; hence, there is a need to capacitate its faculty, especially in ensuring the delivery of quality education.

The pedagogical experiences of the senior faculty may contribute to an impressive learning environment. However, the shift to new modes of teaching also entails a balance between a teacher's pedagogical skills and technology skills because, according to Stevani & Tarigan (2022), more than technology alone is needed to promote student learning effectively.

The university's faculty roster is highlighted by an interesting combination of a good number of senior faculty, the nearly-retiring teachers who have been in the service for 20 to more than 30 years, and neophyte faculty with at least a year of experience. These nearly-retiring teachers are best characterized by their difficulty with the trends in technology as they claim they were educated at a time when computers were not yet introduced in schools. Their experiences include consistent requests for assistance from the young faculty members, especially on using various forms of technology.

Senior faculty members encounter numerous difficulties, especially those unsure of or uncomfortable using ICT technologies. To adjust to this new educational environment, they must learn technology-related abilities. Due to additional planning and administration, they claim that online training requires more time and effort than conventional in-person classes.

Kalinga State University utilizes various online platforms like Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Zoom, and Learning Management Systems for delivering educational content. How well do senior faculty members adapt to this educational trend?

This paper aimed to document the lived experiences of these senior faculty in the university as they embark on the new normal set-up in education. It examined the personal barriers that affect the senior faculty's coping while delivering instruction online. Furthermore, the teaching complaints and emotional sentiments of senior faculty on e-learning platforms and how these technologies influence their effectiveness in delivering learning instruction to their students were also revealed.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Shift to Online Teaching

The epidemic transformed Philippine education beyond traditional classrooms through distance learning. Primary schools used modules, and higher education institutions embraced online learning, requiring educators to adapt quickly. The shift underscored the critical need for strong technological capabilities in delivering instructional resources, conducting classes, and managing programs online (Fry, 2001; Means et al., 2009).

Online learning provides various meanings (Scherer et al., 2021; Moore et al., 2011; Singh & Thurman, 2019); however, this study defines online education as education delivered in an online environment through the Internet for teaching and learning, and this includes online learning on the part of the students that are not dependent on their physical or virtual co-location (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

Online learning could be synchronous or synchronous (Hrantinski, 2008). Both can be successful and efficient if their advantages and disadvantages are recognized.

Learners' motivation in online education rises with technology use and internet access (Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006). Joshit et al. (2020) and Ribeiro (2020) highlight the debate over delivering high-quality training online due to the absence of face-to-face interaction, emphasizing the challenges and behavioral adjustments required in the digital evolution of instruction.

In online learning design, addressing nine dimensions is crucial and may take nine months and 2-3 instruction cycles for improvement (Means et al., 2014; Barbour et al., 2020). These dimensions include modality, pacing, student-instructor ratio, pedagogy, online instructor and student roles, communication synchronization, and feedback source.

The pandemic highlighted the school system's vulnerability to external threats (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). The shift to a new teaching and learning mode extended beyond mastering online instruction, becoming an emergency remote teaching (ERT) scenario—a temporary change due to crises (Hodges et al., 2020). ERT includes various learning approaches applicable beyond pandemics, such as blended learning, radio, and paper-based methods.

2.2. The Challenge to Teachers

The urgent shift to online learning during the recent pandemic has intensified the challenges faced by university faculty and staff, compounding existing pressures in balancing teaching, research, and service (Houston et al., 2006; Houlden & Veletsianos, 2020). Faculty members, regardless of background or age, had to adapt to remote teaching, dealing with practical and technical issues without adequate support (Hodges et al., 2020). Additionally, a major hurdle for university teachers has been the lack of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) necessary for effective online teaching, encompassing technical aspects, administrative skills, and the foundational principles essential for meaningful online learning experiences (Shulman, 1987; Angeli & Valanides, 2005; Kali et al., 2011; Ching et al., 2018).

In a study by Keengwe Kidd (2010), 11.6% of the faculty respondents affirmed that spending more time preparing lessons adds to the challenge of attending their children's online classes. A notable 40% of the respondents were also positive for their skills in producing audio-video resources. However, one-third of the group either agreed or disagreed with the level of their preparedness and digital competence to embark on the demands of the new normal in teaching.

2.3. Adaptation Theory

This study integrates adaptation theory and prior research to thoroughly investigate how faculty members responded to the benefits and challenges of online education throughout the epidemic. It analyzes the potential positive and negative effects on faculty well-being and instructional practices. It also underlines the need for adaptability in managing the constantly changing educational world.

Adaptation theory can be used to investigate faculty members' perceptions of online instruction (Jr & Robinson, 2020). The readiness of faculty members to regard online teaching as an extension of their professional responsibilities reflects their ability to adapt to the changing nature of education. This is consistent with the fundamental concept of adaptation, which is defined as the process of assimilating new knowledge and experiences, such as the shift to online training.

This study also investigates potential effects, such as burnout, as discovered by Winfield and Paris (2021). It plans to depart the profession, maybe due to faculty members' experiences with online teaching. These difficulties emphasize the importance of adaptation, and these can be ascribed to quick changes and higher expectations.

Adaptation is the process of changing behavior in response to change in the context of online instruction for senior academics nearing retirement, and it is related to Jean Piaget's adaptation theory.

According to Piaget, assimilation is the process of absorbing new knowledge into current mental models. Senior educators may adjust to online instruction by incorporating online pedagogy into their teaching approaches.

In contrast, accommodation includes adjusting current mental models to reconcile them with new information or experiences that contradict those assumptions. Transitioning senior instructors to online teaching necessitates considerable adjustments in teaching philosophies and methodologies. This is because they are confronted with new problems, such as learning new technological skills, adapting to diverse communication styles, and addressing the needs of online learners.

In the online teaching environment, faculty members nearing retirement encounter distinct situations and problems than they do in traditional classrooms. To adapt to these unforeseeable situations, they must modify their teaching methods, gain new skills, and reconsider their approach to teaching and learning. This adapting process prepares them to fulfill the online classroom's particular needs efficiently.

Piaget's adaptation theory, including assimilation and accommodation processes, was used to understand better how soon-to-retire teachers navigate online education. These seasoned educators have years of experience teaching in traditional classrooms and are transitioning in two stages. They embrace online learning while also adjusting to new difficulties and practices.

This study aimed to investigate how these educators actively engage in assimilative and accommodating processes, how their prior teaching experience informed these processes, and how they managed the transition to online teaching as they approached retirement. It centered on educators who were on the verge of retiring in the setting of online education. This study gives useful information

on how well these instructors can adjust during times of significant change in the educational scene.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

To better comprehend human experiences, this paper was guided by the principles of qualitative research design elaborated by John Creswell (2014, 4th ed.), specifically employing phenomenological procedures pioneered by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Phenomenology is defined by Schramm (2013) as the study of people's conscious experience of their life world, that is, their "everyday life and social action." Phenomenological interviews were consistent with the framework and best suited for the study's objectives, which focused on the lived experiences of the senior faculty in online teaching.

3.2. Participants of the Study

The study participants were identified through purposive convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which data is obtained from a group of people who are easily accessible and available. Individuals in the sample are chosen not because they are the most representative of the overall population but because they are the easiest for the researcher to reach. Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of participants based on characteristics, expertise, experiences, or other criteria (Simkus, 2023).

In this study, the participants were conveniently chosen as those faculty in the Kalinga State University who qualified according to set selection criteria. The university is located in the rural city of Tabuk City, Kalinga. Kalinga is a landlocked province in the Philippines situated within the Cordillera Administrative Region in Luzon.

The participants were generally teachers who have spent 20 years and above in the service, with one having spent half of her life serving the university for 36 years.

Fifteen out of the 25 senior faculty were considered for this study. The participants' work experiences significantly contributed to a diverse perspective on the impact of online teaching on their teaching performance, considering how long they have accustomed their strategies to the traditional education system. Representing diverse aspects like the length of teaching experience, age, educational experience, teaching context, competence level on technology, and their specialization, the participants presented collected data greatly relevant to satisfy the objectives of this study.

Their teaching experience generally ranges from 20-36 years in service to the university. The ages of 50-64 teach high school, agriculture, and general education subjects such as Language and Mathematics. The group unanimously described themselves as refugees of using digital tools in teaching, claiming this is an effect of having graduated from a curriculum without computer subjects. These similar backgrounds imply a unanimous assessment of their performance in online

teaching while allowing diversity in their experiences as teachers using digital platforms.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Participants

Respondent	Years in Service	Age	Department
ST1	27	54	Mathematics
ST2	29	56	Mathematics
ST3	20	55	Agriculture
ST4	26	56	Languages
ST5	36	55	Education
ST6	24	64	High School
ST7	29	55	Agriculture
ST8	27	56	High School
ST9	24	50	Physical Education
ST10	22	51	Agriculture
ST11	20	50	Languages
ST12	25	55	Science
ST13	25	54	Education
ST14	24	53	High School
ST15	21	50	Science

The main challenge in coping with changes in the education system includes mastering new technological things (Reis, 2008). Still, the shared experiences of the faculty in online teaching further qualified them as study participants. These faculty generally needed help in coping with the use of technology in teaching. The group also revealed they are graduates of curricula without computer subjects included.

3.3. Data Gathering Procedure

To collect primary data, interviews with the senior faculty lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were recorded in writing and transcribed verbatim. A semi-structured interview format comprising ten questions based on synthesizing the reviewed literature and guided by the study's objectives was facilitated. The interview commenced with a random, casual conversation about teaching experiences until items asked led to answers to the research questions.

A focus group discussion that lasted about an hour was also facilitated, recorded, and transcribed verbatim. It aimed to clarify some of the unclear initial findings, verify the codes developed, and validate the generated themes from the shared data.

3.4. Data Analysis

For the first analysis stage, we were guided by the inductive approach (Creswell, 2017) in the open coding of the data sets (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016). We manually coded the information word-by-word and line-by-line, noting instances that stood out to us while attempting to avoid relying on prior knowledge and preconceived notions that might have influenced how we interpreted the information. Open

coding allowed us to work with the data rather than relying on pre-existing classifications.

The study's objectives directed us to explore themes that would reveal barriers experienced by the participants along personal, teaching, and emotional aspects and which would contribute to an assessment of their professional teaching performance in an online platform.

We based the creation of composite characters on the unique stories of the participants. We created these composite entities by combining components from the accounts of numerous participants rather than concentrating primarily on each participant. This strategy preserves the participants' anonymity while capturing their experiences' essence. Cognizant of each participant's distinctive tale, we carefully considered the particulars of each participant's experience.

We had a central question that guided our analysis: "What are the experiences of the senior faculty affecting their teaching performance?" This question served as the framework for the analysis while staying focused on the study's objectives. We considered including each participant's tale in these group composites to do justice to the varied participant experiences in this way. We placed the stories in broader social and educational situations, which led to a discussion on how the emergent themes from the composite characters' experiences related to the overall context of the study, shedding light on the collective experiences of the senior faculty.

The approach enabled the preservation of the senior faculty's identity while considering the general themes and insights from their experiences in online teaching.

4. Results and Discussion

In this study, an examination of the interview responses of the university's senior teachers on the online teaching-learning set-up was conducted through thematic analysis. The senior teachers' perspective regarding questions such as "How do you assess your teaching ability online?" and "Do you think you have performed well in your duties as a teacher?" was the basis for thematic analysis.

4.1 Personal Barriers of the Senior Faculty

The opening of classes for the AY 2021-2022 left the higher education institution faculty expecting to maneuver a class of around 60-70 students in an online platform considering quality education.

Kalinga State University, for instance, opened the semester with a series of trainings on flexible learning and the like to prepare its faculty for the new normal set-up in education.

In as much as preparations were made to ready the workforce, there were faculty members who had difficulty coping with the emerging teaching trends. These are the university's "nearly-retiring" teachers who have considered themselves digital

refugees from a no-computer generation. The digital change in instructional delivery came with various logistical obstacles, as Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) pointed out. One of these is that the majority of instructors needed to prepare to provide high-quality education remotely.

Digital Refugees: Limit in Digital Knowledge

One of the emergent themes to describe the participants' barriers to performing at their best was their need for digital knowledge. The records of the personal barriers these teachers have encountered since the launch of online teaching and learning relate to age, noting how they easily forget what is taught, for instance, the 'difficulty in mastering the ins and outs of digital technology because, as I age, I easily forget' (ST2), unfamiliarity with the introduced digital tools further shared as '[I need to] familiarize myself with the software and the computer or spend a long time on online tutorials (ST11), and the consistent need for assistance or tutorial further saying 'I find difficulty in navigating the computer and I always need assistance' (ST4).

According to Moralista & Oducado (2020), most faculty members who have resistance and indifference towards online teaching and learning have intermediate computer competency and need more training in online teaching. Despite the school-based training most of the senior teachers participated in, the narrated accounts provide evidence of their resistance to the new normal teaching setup. This resistance is brought by their need for more experience navigating the World Wide Web and even mastering their personal computers.

Digital Refugees: The Burden of Mobile Load

In addition, the senior faculty also share the burden of maintaining enough load balance to conduct online classes. This is required, especially when a synchronous meeting is scheduled and applies to faculty and students. The demand for a stronger internet connection highlights the need for more spending. Senior faculty need help with allotting daily budget for a good internet connection and listed this as a foremost complaint, specifically noting disappointment for not having received any load allowance from the school (ST1). Some participants also pointed out how their budget was affected (ST5, ST7) since the demand for online teaching became strong; further, their students do not attend online classes because of prioritizing food over enough load data (ST10, ST13).

Digital Refugees: The Physical Fatigue

The longer time spent sitting down led to more body pains experienced by most teachers engaged in online classes. In a study conducted by Kumari (2020) on the effect of online classes on the psycho-physical health of teachers, percentages of online class taker teachers were higher in physical illnesses such as headache, eye problems, shoulder and back-bone pain, stomach-related problems, like indigestion, acidity, gas and the like in comparison to those teachers without online classes. Similar experiences were shared by the senior faculty on this aspect, enumerating back pain, sore eyes because of too much exposure to the use of computers (ST1, ST3), raised blood pressure, and physical and mental stress (ST9, ST13).

4.2 Teaching Barriers of the Senior Teachers

The pandemic began in March 2020 and has long been the manipulator of significant changes in the educational system. These changes include sitting down for a long period compared to more movements during face-to-face classes. The demands of online teaching require a faculty to stay longer in his seat as classes are done with the aid of desktops, mobile phones, or laptops. It is no wonder the senior faculty claim they become more tired as they struggle with time in this teaching and learning process set-up due to fluctuating internet connection.

Digital Refugees: Unstable Internet Connectivity

Adding to the difficulty in mastering computer navigation, senior teachers also expressed concern about a stable internet connection. It is a requirement for the faculty to meet once at least a week with their students in synchronous sessions, and the rest of the week may be allotted for uploading lessons or activities. However, like most teachers, the senior faculty experience unstable connections (ST9, ST1), leading to fewer students joining the class (ST4) or submitting their activities (ST8).

This concern remains true for many students, considering that they come from far-flung barangays in the province with farming or gardening as the main source of daily income. Moralista and Oducado (2020) highlighted the issue of internet connectivity as another reason for hesitation toward online education, not only among faculty but also among students. This is explained by the average of 5.5 Mbps internet connection speech, which makes the Philippines the country with the slowest internet connection speed among the 15 Asia Pacific countries (Manila Time, 2018).

In this difficult time, ensuring digital equity is critical. All digital devices, the internet, and Wi-Fi are not equally available to all teachers and students. Lack of suitable digital tools, no internet connections, or shaky Wi-Fi connections can cause many problems, and many students may miss out on learning opportunities (Dhawan, 2020). These claims support the recorded sharing of the senior faculty on their difficulty with stable internet connection.

Digital Refugees: Struggling Online Classroom Management Skills

With the dilemma of being able to cope with the demands of distance learning, senior faculty consider the online classroom a strong force to reckon with daily. Compared to traditional face-to-face interactions, the online platform hampers the ability of the faculty to manage their classes successfully; hence, the struggle in classroom management.

Online Class Management

During face-to-face classes, a teacher could easily call their students' attention and check for their understanding of the lesson. The senior faculty needs help ensuring students' comprehension and participation in the online classroom. More specifically, these senior faculty need to be more certain about maintaining student engagement or relaying a clear explanation of the lessons (ST1). Most also shared the dilemma of figuring out how to meet the student's learning needs and

identifying the intervention that must be given to realize the learning process (ST9). Another senior faculty reiterated how the teaching-learning process must be a dual process where there must be interaction between a teacher and a learner and how this is not achieved in online teaching (ST11). The absence of interaction and factors such as personal attributes and perceived course characteristics can impact online engagement (Purarjomandlangrudi et al., 2020); hence, the roles shared by teachers and learners in online instruction are emphasized.

These recorded experiences include both sides of the senior faculty and the students. It is difficult to participate or to lead in an unfamiliar platform. As Wu (2021) said, in online teaching, there is more time spent on roll calls and checking the status of the devices or equipment to be used for online teaching. So, the teacher's technical capabilities for online teaching, students' familiarity with digital platforms, and the equipment to be used affect the quality of e-learning. This is the case for the senior faculty of Kalinga State University, considering that many areas still have unstable internet access in the province.

Questioning Students' Outputs

Moreover, the senior faculty also aired the struggle to ensure that the students' submissions were their original work and claimed these were mostly copied from an online source or similar to a classmate's answer. The senior faculty shared that answers are difficult to validate if they come from the students because, with the online platform, they can copy and paste and then forward to their classmates (ST4) indicated by the same inputs submitted (ST7). Also, the online platform allows cheating, copyright infringement, and plagiarism (ST8), and the faculty needed help identifying which outputs are merely downloaded or originally written (ST10).

Todd (2020) presented that teachers identified three types of disadvantages in online teaching. The first concern is technology. Second, there are organizational issues associated with not being fully aware of what students are doing: "Not really seeing each other makes it difficult to predict the emotional situation" and "If we were studying in the classroom, we would be able to walk over to the students to see what they are doing, to ask, to see what they have written, but we cannot do anything online."

The inability of senior faculty to monitor closely the activities, the comprehension, and the level of the students in learning adds to the difficulty they experience in coping with the demands of distance education. This is in comparison to how they manage their classes in face-to-face gatherings.

Digital Refugees: The Struggle with Time

Moreover, as they cope with teaching online, the senior faculty bear the struggle of time- waiting for a successful upload or a download, checking the students' outputs, preparing technology-driven lessons, and even submitting student outputs.

More specifically, the participants shared that they spent a longer time checking the students' work because of waiting for a stable internet connection (ST3), recording videos, and editing them before uploading and presenting them in class (ST5). Also, they have aired how their time is affected by students who still need to submit their requirements (ST15, ST15) or even waiting for them to log in or join a virtual class (ST14).

According to Bonk (2001), 62% of faculty respondents in their study indicated that "the main obstacle to using the web in teaching was the preparation time required." In the case of the senior faculty of KSU, time constraint affects their preparation time simultaneously with their struggle to master their technology tools.

4.3 Emotional Barriers of the Senior Teachers

Along with the barriers and complaints of the senior teachers are emotional sentiments, which add to their experiences in this health crisis. The study by Lizana et al. (2021) among Chilean teachers' showed that their QoL (quality of life) perception had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings could be related to work overload due to teleworking or feelings of uncertainty, loneliness, and fear that the pandemic and its associated confinements will worsen.

The senior faculty of KSU share various sentiments that spring from their experiences in online teaching. Aside from the physical complaints, they air psychological and mental concerns that trigger the difficulties of online teaching. These themes summarize the emotions surrounding the senior teachers' daily stories as they embark on online teaching.

Digital Refugees: The Disappointed, Unsatisfied and Ashamed Teacher

The senior teachers could be more satisfied with many things in the new normal education set-up. This includes the support and assistance from the administration, their ability to handle their classes, and the financial burden they get to cope with online class demands. The senior faculty claim to need more proper motivation in the new set-up of teaching (ST3) but are rather instructed to teach online, leaving them feeling left behind being teachers who are outside the present generation (ST7, ST11). Moreover, considering the ample time to work on it, they are disgusted by the results of students' outputs (ST8). Add to this their financial dilemma brought by the need to maintain enough load balance to explore online for their classes (ST14).

Moreover, the senior teachers experience low self-esteem, especially on their skills and capacity as teachers in this online education. They have become unsatisfied with their accomplishments, emphasizing what they were and could not do for their students. They have shared the dissatisfaction brought by the strenuous work with students who seem not to comprehend the lessons (ST4), frustration for not being able to impose immediate follow-up to students needing intervention (ST6, ST9), and even in performing poorly as an instructor (ST15). Also, the senior teachers claim they could not impose a high standard to follow

(ST11) in conducting their classes because of the online platform and also in consideration of the student's pace, ability, and situation. The shared accounts of the senior teachers coincide with the findings of Richards et al. (2017), where teachers claim to be emotionally exhausted and stressed in their roles whenever they are unable to impose follow-up on students. Adding up to the pressure of online teaching is the shame the senior teachers experience, especially when requesting help from other teachers. With the similar experiences these younger teachers also experience, the senior faculty would hesitate to ask for assistance since it may appear as a disturbing gesture. The senior faculty are hesitant to always ask for help (ST6, ST8) and feel inferior not being able to cope (ST8, ST10). They consider themselves a disturbance to the young teachers because of the repeated need to ask for help (ST12, ST15).

Based on these findings, younger faculty members are more at ease with technology and digital tools, have more expertise with online teaching platforms and learning management systems, and are more likely to embrace online teaching as a teaching and learning process. They are also less likely to feel embarrassed about receiving help from others, less likely to be concerned about internet access and bandwidth, and more prepared to meet the demands of online teaching. These realizations are supported by the findings of Naz et al. (2021), which revealed that the younger faculty have high levels of self-confidence in their knowledge of content, use of instructional strategies, and the employment of appropriate technology for pedagogical use. In terms of online teaching, younger faculty have a comparative advantage. They are more technologically savvy and have greater expertise with online teaching platforms and learning management systems. Nearly retiring teachers have a lot of experience and information that might be useful in online education. They also have a thorough awareness of their pupils' needs. Near-retiring instructors can be successful in online education by using their talents and collaborating with younger staff.

4.4 Impact of the New Normal Set-Up in Teaching

Digital Refugees: No Longer Effective

The complaints, difficulties, and sentiments shared by the senior faculty prove their struggle to deliver the lessons assigned to them. Claiming they perform way better during traditional conduct of classes, the senior faculty share the decline in their teaching performance. This decline is characterized by needing help to identify the best teaching strategy (ST1) or accepting that they have performed poorly (ST8). In addition, the senior faculty describe themselves as no longer effective in transferring lessons because the students are better at technology (ST14), they spend more time learning how to navigate online instead of reviewing their lessons (ST11), and they are not able to personally assess their impact to the students (ST15).

In the study of Hidalgo et al. (2021), the need to deepen the knowledge about teachers' experiences and challenges related to the pandemic was exposed. Also, an institutional support mechanism must be developed to ensure the faculty's well-being.

This study aimed to reveal the different experiences of the senior faculty at Kalinga State University and further unravel their complaints, difficulties, and sentiments relevant to the online teaching set-up. The results suggest a calibration of the preparatory activities and close monitoring of faculty situations in the new normal.

5. Conclusion

This study shed light on senior faculty's complex difficulties when adjusting to online instruction. Known as "Digital Refugees," teachers who are almost ready to retire struggle with their lack of digital literacy, the cost of their mobile devices, and physical exhaustion. Teaching hurdles include poor internet access, classroom management challenges, and maintaining student submissions' academic integrity. Senior faculty members emotionally communicate disappointment, dissatisfaction, and embarrassment, underscoring the need for further assistance. The findings further suggest senior faculty members feel less able to interact with pupils who are proficient in technology, and teaching efficacy in the online environment has declined. The results highlight how important it is to adjust training programs and set up support systems to improve faculty well-being in the changing context of higher education.

6. Implications

The pressing concerns of the senior faculty in the discharge of their duties call for an enhancement of training programs on the use of technology in teaching and reveal how universities may, at times, fail to consider the different pace, ability, and background of their faculty before the deployment of changes in the teaching and learning process. It is further recommended that parallel research be conducted focused on the challenges and/or solutions identified in this study.

7. Limitation

The similar accounts of the participants on their difficulty in having a stable internet connection may be due to the rural location of the university. A study in the urban areas on the experiences of nearly-retiring teachers may also be conducted.

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