

The Resiliency of Senior Teachers in Blended Learning

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated an abrupt shift to blended learning (BL), exposing significant challenges for teachers, particularly senior educators perceived as vulnerable to technological demands. This study explored the resiliency of senior teachers in Angeles City, Philippines, who successfully implemented BL during the 2021–2022 school year. Using a qualitative multiple case study design, in-depth interviews were conducted with ten senior teachers (aged 51–61), all rated “Outstanding” in their performance. Findings revealed major challenges in online learning (technological hurdles, poor connectivity, low student motivation and attendance, difficulties in monitoring integrity) and offline modular learning (non-submission of modules, parental intervention, declining cooperation). Despite these obstacles, teachers displayed resilience through strategies such as continuous upskilling, flexibility in pedagogy, reward systems, strengthened home–school partnerships, optimized communication platforms, and interventions like home visits. Their coping mechanisms highlight passion, commitment, and adaptability. The study concludes that senior teachers are a resilient asset, “old but gold,” whose experiences offer valuable insights for educational policy and practice in times of crisis and beyond.*

Keywords: *resiliency, senior teachers, blended learning, coping strategies*

Introduction

The global COVID-19 pandemic precipitated an unprecedented and rapid shift to blended and distance learning models, exposing and exacerbating pre-existing educational inequities, particularly between well-resourced and developing nations (UNESCO, 2020; Kim, 2020; Toquero, 2020). In the Philippines, the Department of Education’s Learning Continuity Plan institutionalized this transition to ensure education persisted. However, its implementation was fraught with systemic challenges, including weak digital infrastructure, unequal access to technology among students, and a



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significant increase in the workload and emotional burden placed on educators (DepEd, 2020; Castroverde & Acala, 2021).

Within this demanding context, senior teachers—often defined as those with extensive experience and advancing age—faced a dual challenge. They not only had to adapt to new pedagogical and technological demands but also contended with a pervasive deficit narrative that stereotypes them as less adaptable and technologically resistant (Scherer et al., 2015; Gore & Rickards, 2021). This perspective stands in stark contrast to the theoretical understanding of teacher resilience. Contemporary scholarship frames resilience not as a fixed, innate trait but as a dynamic, contextual process. It involves the capacity to sustain professional commitment and well-being amidst adversity by actively drawing upon and mobilizing a combination of personal, professional, and ecological resources (Gu & Li, 2013; Ungar, 2019; Mansfield & Beltman, 2019). Viewed through this lens, a senior teacher's long tenure, deep pedagogical content knowledge, and proven dedication to their vocation can be reconceptualized not as obstacles, but as potential reservoirs of strength and adaptive capacity—a possibility echoed in studies on the resilience of other educational stakeholders, such as novice school principals navigating crises (De Leon et al., 2023).

Existing research on pandemic-era education has extensively documented general challenges in blended learning, such as connectivity issues, student engagement, and assessment integrity (e.g., Rasheed et al., 2020; Dhawan, 2020; Clarin & Baluyos, 2022). Studies have also begun to explore teacher resilience broadly (e.g., Lagat, 2021; Platsidou & Daniilidou, 2021). However, a significant gap persists: the lived, nuanced experiences of senior teachers remain notably underrepresented. While some studies touch on age-related challenges with technology (Gayola & Janer, 2020), there is a paucity of in-depth, qualitative research that investigates how senior teachers specifically perceived and navigated the dual modalities of blended learning. Their potential resilience is often

assumed or overlooked, rather than systematically examined from their own perspective.

Addressing this gap, this study poses the central research question: How did senior teachers in public secondary schools demonstrate resilience in the implementation of blended learning during the pandemic? It seeks to move beyond the deficit narrative by qualitatively exploring the specific challenges they encountered, the personal and professional attributes they leveraged, and the active coping strategies they employed to ensure learning continuity. Ultimately, this research aims to recast senior teachers not as passive resisters to change, but as active, resourceful, and resilient agents who played a critical role in sustaining education through crisis. The findings intend to serve as a basis for developing a targeted resiliency plan that honors and leverages the unique strengths of experienced educators.

Method

This qualitative study employed a multiple-case study design to conduct an in-depth exploration of the resiliency of senior teachers in the blended learning modality. The research was conducted in selected public secondary schools within the Division of Angeles City, Philippines. Ten (10) senior teachers, aged 51 to 61, who held an “Outstanding” performance rating for School Year 2021-2022 and were actively implementing blended learning, were purposively selected as participants. Primary data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews designed to probe three core analytical variables: (1) the participants' personal and professional attributes (e.g., age, length of service, training attended); (2) the challenges they encountered in both the online and offline components of blended learning; and (3) the coping strategies they employed to navigate these difficulties. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and supplemented with field notes. The data were analyzed using a rigorous thematic analysis approach. This involved an iterative process of familiarization with the transcripts, systematic

generation of initial descriptive codes, and the aggregation of these codes into broader analytical themes through constant comparison within and across the individual cases. The analysis moved from identifying specific challenges (e.g., poor internet connectivity, student disengagement) to categorizing the active strategies used to overcome them (e.g., upskilling through self-learning, partnering with parents, employing flexible teaching methods). All research procedures adhered to strict ethical protocols, including securing informed consent, ensuring participant anonymity through pseudonyms (e.g., Teacher A, Teacher B), and obtaining necessary institutional approvals. This methodological approach was designed to yield a nuanced, evidence-based understanding of resilience as manifested in the lived experiences and adaptive practices of outstanding senior teachers.

Results

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected to answer the central research question: “How did senior teachers in public secondary schools demonstrate resilience in the implementation of blended learning during the pandemic?” The findings are structured to correspond directly with the core components of the study’s conceptual framework and the specific variables investigated: (1) the personal and professional attributes of the participants, (2) the challenges encountered in online and offline settings, and (3) the coping strategies they employed. The presentation integrates descriptive summaries, thematic analysis, and supporting participant quotations to illustrate how the senior teachers’ experiences collectively constitute a dynamic process of resilience.

Personal and professional attributes: the foundation of resilience

The analysis first establishes the profile of the participants, as their attributes provided the foundational resources upon which their resilience was built. The ten senior teachers (5 male, 5 female), aged 51 to 61, brought substantial professional capital to the crisis. Their average

teaching experience was over 19 years, with five holding Master Teacher I positions. Crucially, all participants had an “Outstanding” performance rating, indicating a pre-existing standard of professional excellence. A salient theme across their narratives was a deep-seated sense of vocation and commitment. For instance, Teacher F stated, *“Teaching is my calling. Pandemic or not, we must continue,”* while Teacher B framed his duty in spiritual terms, highlighting an inner drive that transcended circumstantial difficulties. Professionally, while some initially reported limited digital skills, their extensive pedagogical experience became a critical asset, allowing them to adapt core teaching principles to new modalities. These attributes of experience, proven performance, and strong professional identity were not mere background details but were actively mobilized as the first line of defense against the disruptions of blended learning.

Challenges encountered: the adversity context

The data analysis identified a complex set of challenges that formed the “adversity” context against which resilience was demonstrated. These challenges were distinctly categorized into online and offline settings, revealing the dual burden of the blended modality.

In the online setting, the most pervasive challenge was technological and infrastructural. All participants cited poor and unstable internet connectivity as a major barrier to effective teaching and assessment. This was compounded by a significant engagement deficit: low and inconsistent student attendance, difficulty in motivating learners, and the near impossibility of monitoring academic honesty, as students frequently left cameras off. Teacher, I encapsulated this, saying, *“It is hard to know if students are really listening, or if they are the ones answering.”*

In the offline (modular) setting, challenges shifted to issues of compliance, integrity, and communication. Teachers reported high rates of non-submission, late submission, or the submission of incomplete modules. A particularly demoralizing challenge was discovering that parents had answered modules for their children, undermining the learning

process. Furthermore, a marked decline in parental involvement and cooperation over time was noted, with Teacher D observing, “*At first, parents were helpful, but later they lost interest.*”

These findings, summarized in Table 1, confirm that the senior teachers operated within an environment characterized by significant external stressors, aligning with broader literature on barriers to distance education in resource-constrained contexts.

Table 1. Thematic summary of challenges encountered

Setting	Primary Challenge Themes	Illustrative Data
Online	1. Technological/Infrastructural Hurdles 2. Student Engagement & Attendance 3. Assessment & Monitoring Integrity	“Sometimes I would spend 15 minutes just waiting for a stable signal” (Teacher A)
Offline (Modular)	1. Non-/Late Submission & Incomplete Work 2. Compromised Academic Integrity 3. Eroding Parental Partnership	“Modules were returned blank, or worse, obviously written by parents.” (Teacher D)

Coping strategies: demonstrating resilience

The core of the analysis reveals how the senior teachers actively demonstrated resilience through a repertoire of adaptive coping strategies. These were not random actions but deliberate, strategic responses to the specific challenges identified above.

1. Upskilling and Reskilling (Addressing Technological Challenges): Confronting their initial digital limitations, teachers proactively engaged in self-directed learning. They attended webinars, studied YouTube tutorials, and sought help from colleagues and family. Teacher E noted, “I learned to edit videos because my grandson showed me how.” This theme demonstrates agency and a growth mindset, directly countering the stereotype of technological resistance.

2. **Pedagogical Innovation and Flexibility (Addressing Engagement Challenges):** To capture student attention online, teachers innovated their pedagogy. They incorporated games, short videos, and even platforms like TikTok to make lessons relatable. Teacher C shared, “I used short videos and even TikTok so students would pay attention.” They also showed remarkable flexibility in schedules and deadlines, adapting to the realities of their students’ lives.
3. **Strengthening Home-School Partnerships (Addressing Compliance & Communication Challenges):** Teachers worked diligently to rebuild the crucial parent-teacher link. They maintained constant communication via group chats, conducted persistent follow-ups via call and text, and, when necessary, performed home visits despite health risks. Teacher H explained, “We visited homes when students were no longer submitting modules.”
4. **Strategic and Context-Specific Interventions (Holistic Problem-Solving):** The most compelling evidence of resilient adaptability was the creation of unique, context-specific solutions. Teacher J described leaving modules in a trusted community store (sari-sari store) for working parents, while Teacher H merged his online classes from multiple sections to create a more interactive virtual environment.

These strategies, synthesized in Table 2, show that resilience was an active, creative process. The teachers moved beyond mere endurance to actively shape their environment, leveraging their experience to develop practical, often ingenious, solutions.

Table 2. thematic analysis of coping strategies as resilience-in-action

Resilience Strategy	Thematic Description	Representative Participant Voice
Proactive Adaptation	Self-directed learning to overcome technological gaps.	<i>“I watched video tutorials on how to use Google Classroom... it was my own initiative.”</i> (Teacher A)
Pedagogical Creativity	Modifying teaching methods to sustain student engagement.	<i>“If the lecture won’t work, we play a quiz game. You have to match their energy.”</i> (Teacher C)
Relational Persistence	Diligently rebuilding and maintaining connections with parents and students.	<i>“I called, I texted, I even used my own load. You cannot give up on communication.”</i> (Teacher I)
Contextual Ingenuity	Developing localized, practical solutions to logistical problems.	<i>“For parents who worked late, I left the modules in a sari-sari store. It was effective.”</i> (Teacher J)

Synthesis: resilience as a dynamic process

The integrated analysis of attributes, challenges, and strategies reveals that the resilience of these senior teachers was not a static trait but a dynamic process. It was initiated by the external shock of the pandemic and the demands of blended learning (Challenges). In response, the teachers drew upon their inner reserves of commitment and professional identity (Attributes) to fuel a series of targeted actions (Coping Strategies). This process aligns with the theoretical model of resilience as a transaction between individuals and their environment. Their “outstanding” resilience was demonstrated precisely through this sustained, adaptive effort to maintain their professional commitment and pedagogical effectiveness against considerable odds. The findings position these educators not as passive victims of circumstance or resistant to change,

but as resourceful agents who played a critical role in sustaining educational continuity through a period of profound crisis.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that senior teachers confronted significant challenges in implementing blended learning but were able to overcome these through diverse coping strategies and deeply rooted personal and professional attributes. These results contribute to a broader understanding of resilience in education, particularly as it applies to older educators who are often stereotyped as less adaptive to change.

One of the central insights is that resilience among senior teachers was not a static quality but a dynamic process enacted across multiple dimensions—individual, relational, and institutional. This is consistent with Ungar’s (2019) ecological view of resilience, which highlights the interaction between personal agency and contextual supports. Individually, the teachers invested in upskilling, learning new technologies through self-directed means and assistance from peers or family. Relationally, they sustained communication with parents and students, and in some cases conducted home visits. Institutionally, they conformed to DepEd mandates while simultaneously innovating localized solutions. Taken together, these practices demonstrate that resilience emerges not from isolated traits but from the interplay of internal capacities and external networks.

The experiences of senior teachers also challenge deficit-oriented discourses that portray older educators as technologically resistant or rigid (Scherer et al., 2015; Gore & Rickards, 2021). On the contrary, the participants exhibited flexibility, creativity, and commitment. Their willingness to adopt unconventional strategies—such as using TikTok to capture student interest—illustrates adaptability that transcends age. This finding resonates with Day and Gu (2014), who argue that teacher resilience is sustained by professional identity and moral purpose. For many of the senior teachers in this study, teaching was not merely an

occupation but a calling, which reinforced their perseverance in the face of adversity.

The findings also echo and extend existing literature on the challenges of blended learning in the Philippines. Studies have documented issues such as weak internet infrastructure, inconsistent student participation, and parental over-involvement in modular learning (Castroverde & Alcala, 2021; Jena, 2020). The accounts of senior teachers corroborate these findings while adding depth through personal testimonies. For instance, Teacher D's observation that parents often completed modules on behalf of learners reflects a broader systemic issue of compromised assessment integrity. Similarly, Teacher A's frustrations with unstable internet connectivity highlight the infrastructural inequities that persist in Philippine education. By foregrounding these voices, the study contributes a nuanced understanding of how macro-level challenges translate into the lived realities of classroom practice.

An important comparative dimension emerges when considering the findings of De Leon et al. (2023), who investigated how novice principals managed public schools during the pandemic. Despite their lack of administrative experience, these principals displayed resilience through resource mobilization, stakeholder engagement, and context-specific innovations. Their experiences parallel those of senior teachers, albeit at different levels of the education system. Whereas principals demonstrated resilience in organizational governance, senior teachers exhibited it in pedagogical adaptation and learner engagement. Both cases affirm that resilience in education is distributed across roles and is not dependent on age or tenure. This underscores resilience as a systemic capacity that sustains institutions in times of crisis.

The findings also carry implications for resilience theory. While much of the literature has focused on resilience as a means of individual survival in adverse contexts, the experiences of senior teachers suggest that resilience is equally about preserving core values and maintaining professional identity. For instance, Teacher J's insistence on honesty and

accountability demonstrates resilience as the safeguarding of ethical standards, not merely the adoption of new techniques. This aligns with more recent findings that resilience is closely tied to sustaining teachers' motivation and professional commitment even when conditions are unfavorable. Trigueros et al. (2020) demonstrated that transformational teacher leadership positively influences academic motivation and resilience, which in turn reduce burnout and enhance performance. Their study highlights that intrinsic motivation and resilient capacities enable teachers to remain committed and effective despite the challenges present in demanding educational contexts.

Moreover, the study highlights the socio-cultural specificity of resilience. In the Philippine context, where familial ties and community solidarity are culturally salient, senior teachers drew heavily on relationships with parents and local networks to sustain student learning. Strategies such as leaving modules in community stores or visiting learners' homes reflect how resilience is shaped by cultural practices of bayanihan, or communal cooperation. This finding enriches resilience theory by situating it within the lived realities of local contexts rather than treating it as a universal construct.

Ultimately, the study affirms that senior teachers are not only capable of adapting to blended learning but are also critical assets to the education system during crises. Their experiences challenge stereotypes, expand theoretical perspectives on resilience, and provide practical lessons for educational management. By reframing senior teachers as "old but gold," the study contributes to a more inclusive narrative that values the contributions of older educators alongside those of younger colleagues and novice leaders. These insights underscore the need for teacher development programs and policies that leverage the strengths of senior teachers, integrating their experiential wisdom with ongoing professional support to build a more resilient education system.

Conclusion

This study investigated the resiliency of senior teachers in the implementation of blended learning in public secondary schools in Angeles City, Philippines. The findings revealed that despite systemic challenges—including poor internet connectivity, learner disengagement, and issues in modular instruction—senior teachers successfully demonstrated resilience through technological upskilling, pedagogical innovation, strengthened home–school partnerships, and strategic interventions tailored to their contexts. Their resilience was anchored in personal and professional attributes such as commitment, patience, flexibility, and a strong sense of professional identity. These attributes enabled them not only to adapt but also to uphold educational values such as honesty, accountability, and learner-centered practice.

The results affirm that senior teachers are not passive recipients of change but active agents who contribute significantly to educational continuity during crises. Far from confirming deficit narratives about older educators, the study positions senior teachers as “old but gold,” highlighting their creativity, dedication, and pedagogical wisdom as indispensable assets. The study also demonstrates that resilience in education is not confined to individuals but is a systemic phenomenon, manifesting at the classroom, community, and institutional levels. In parallel with findings on novice principals (De Leon et al., 2023), the experiences of senior teachers illustrate that resilience operates across multiple roles, affirming its value as a cross-cutting capacity within education systems.

From these insights, several implications emerge for policy and practice. First, teacher professional development programs should intentionally integrate continuous upskilling and reskilling opportunities that are accessible to senior teachers. Capacity-building initiatives should recognize their diverse learning needs while valuing the experiential expertise they bring. Second, policies should promote intergenerational mentoring, positioning senior teachers as guides for younger colleagues

while simultaneously ensuring they receive support in mastering emerging technologies. This reciprocal model strengthens both teacher capacity and school culture. Third, institutional support systems should be enhanced to reduce the burden of blended learning implementation. This includes investments in stable internet infrastructure, provision of devices, and mechanisms to monitor assessment integrity. Fourth, schools should cultivate stronger partnerships with parents and communities, recognizing that home–school collaboration is a vital dimension of resilience in blended learning contexts. Finally, teacher evaluation frameworks should acknowledge resilience as a professional competency, ensuring that dedication and adaptability are formally recognized and rewarded.

The study also highlights directions for future research. Further investigations could expand the scope to include senior teachers in rural settings or compare experiences across generational cohorts of teachers. Longitudinal studies may also be undertaken to examine how resilience evolves beyond crisis contexts and how it informs sustained educational reforms.

In conclusion, the resiliency of senior teachers in blended learning reflects the convergence of personal commitment, professional identity, and contextual adaptation. Their stories underscore that resilience is not merely survival under pressure but a proactive, values-driven process that sustains education in times of disruption. By recognizing and supporting senior teachers as resilient actors, policymakers and school leaders can harness their invaluable contributions to building a more adaptive and equitable education system.

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