

Covid-19 Pandemic Challenges for Technical-Vocational Education

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ABSTRACT

Challenges of technical-vocational students during the Covid-19 pandemic, when unidentified and unanswered, can result in detrimental outcomes and incompetent students. This paper presents the challenges for technical-vocational students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Phenomenology was used to gather the data from one Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with five participants and one Key Informant Interview (KII) participant from the sophomore and junior students of technical-vocational education classes in the University of Southeastern Philippines, Obrero Campus, Davao City. Another two KII participants, freshman, and junior students, from technical-vocational education institutions in Davao City. Results revealed that technical-vocational students faced challenges with intermittent internet connectivity, limited financial resources, uncertainty about the future, lacking resources, lack of experiential learning, frequent power outage, lacking self-motivation, unable to manage time, ambient noise, poor response from instructors, unhealthy mental state, too much gadget exposure, busy with household chores, lacking computer skills, and neglectful instructor, technical issue, and lacking in-person interaction. Moreover, these challenges of technical-vocational students have been coped with through resourceful individuals, nurturing spiritual faith, being able to organize tasks, tending to socialize, being able to think positively, fostering mental and physical health, engaging in recreational activities, fostering self-motivation, adaptable to the current situation, determined to finish studies and sentimental feeling towards family. The researcher found that the lack of hands-on learning increases the challenges for students investigating these challenges. The author intended to help students address these problems by developing an efficient intervention.

Keywords: Covid-19, Challenges, Phenomenology, Technical- Vocational Education

The unforeseen closure of schools at all levels caused by COVID-19 led to significant disruptions in the education system that lasted several months and created a teaching and learning gap. These disruptions undoubtedly threaten technical vocational education's goals, as they interfere with the teaching, learning, and other forms of education expected of technical-vocational students (Abdulqadir, 2020). A student's hands-on learning experience is just as necessary as the theoretical side of a subject in the learning process. To maintain the continuity of the lectures, educational institutions were forced to switch to digital platforms. The online approach might be challenging for engineering technology

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programs, especially in courses that use actual laboratory methods as an effective teaching strategy. Laboratory courses with specific gear and software cannot be converted to a virtual environment without sacrificing the benefits of a hands-on approach for engineering technology students (López Gutiérrez, Ponce, & Molina, 2021).

Making the transition toward an online environment presents unique problems for technical-vocational education courses, which require the development of both practical and theoretical abilities. Regarding training system readiness and the availability of digital technology for online education, the move presents additional hurdles for developing countries. Leading to a shortage of internet connectivity, a lack of a computer or laptop, and insufficient skills in operating their college's virtual learning environment, many students found it hard to engage in e-learning (Majumdar, Subrahmanyam, Busan, Schröder, & Schröder, 2021). Other challenges like competing activities such as caring for children and older family members and other domestic chores; some students, particularly women, and girls, suffer additional time restraints. In low-income and at-risk kids, adjusting to remote learning can be more difficult (Hoftijzer, Levin, Santos, & Web, 2020).

Despite adequate literature related to the pandemic challenges to the educational setting mentioned, the researcher noted a lack of literature involving COVID-19 pandemic challenges among technical-vocational education students. Some students don't have supplies or educational devices to support the online class, for instance, a traditional smartphone model and a poor computer network. Not everyone bears Wi-Fi at home to watch, hear and pay attention to online material that educates the anticipated class (Dennis, 2021). Therefore, after stating all the problems. I, as the researcher, will describe the challenges experienced by technical-vocational education students during the pandemic.

This describes a qualitative study of the challenges of students attending a university and technical-vocational institutions. Specifically, it sought to identify the difficulties encountered by technical-vocational students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The following research questions are as follows. What are the challenges of technical-vocational students during the Covid-19 pandemic? What interventions are done to address the challenges? What are the expectations of students towards the instructors? The operational definition of terms used in this study is also defined. Challenges refer to a plural type of challenge, implying that challenges or problems arise from multiple areas simultaneously and necessitate a lot of effort, patience, and drive to deal with a set of events (Vaidya & Ali, 2021). Covid-19, the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2)-caused by Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), has posed a substantial threat to world health. This new virus was primarily disseminated via respiratory droplets and close contact. A range of problems is likely to occur as the disease progresses, especially in critically ill patients (Zhou, Zhang, & Qu, 2020). Moreover, Pandemic means infections are characterized using endemic, outbreak, epidemic, and pandemic terminology. Still, illnesses like hypertension, cancer, violence, and positive, beneficial behaviors can also be defined similarly. A pandemic is an epidemic that spreads across the globe (Grennan, 2019).

Furthermore, Technical-Vocational Education is a planned intervention that brings about learning to make people more relevant and productive in specific economic and technological tasks (Oviawe, Uwameiye, & Uddin, 2017).

Theoretical Lens

This research is based on Creswell's (2013) phenomenological approach, which describes the ordinary meaning of people's lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon. When explaining a phenomenon, phenomenologists concentrate on articulating what all participants share in common. Van Maanen (2016) emphasized that conducting research constantly questions how we see the world and a desire to understand the reality in which we exist as human beings. Because knowing the world entails being in it in a particular way, the process of investigating – questioning – theorizing is a purposeful act of attaching oneself to the world, being a more fully integrated part of it, or, better still, becoming the world. In phenomenology, the principle of "intentionality" refers to an inextricable relationship with the world.

METHODOLOGY

Researchers used a combination of online interviews with key informants and focus group discussions for research for several reasons. This design allows for a joint and comprehensive study of participants' challenges during the Covid 19 pandemic. Second, the group process helps participants explain their views that may not come from a one-on-one interview. In addition, interviewing key informants has advantages because the information comes directly from knowledgeable people and collects data from many people. Due to the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic and inter-agency task force guidelines, the conversation was held online.

Participants were purposely sampled. Technical-vocational students of different levels and institutions were selected to ensure different opinions among individuals. After communication, each student was introduced to the background of the research and invited to participate. Overall, one focus group discussion (FGD) with five participants and three key informants interviewed (KII) participants.

Students who decided to participate in this study received a message via messenger with discussion details to generate the discussion. They were all scheduled through Google Meet. The entire duration of the conversation and interview was recorded for data collection. As with data confidentiality and security, the anonymity of transcripts and final report statements was preserved, and the data was collected over the Internet.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presented results follow the identified themes and are supported by extracts from the interview. Before showing the study's results, I must point out that the results are presented based on technical-vocational students' descriptions of the challenges, interventions, and expectations towards instructors during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 1. Challenges of the Technical-Vocational Education Students During Pandemic.

Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	Emblematic Quotes
Intermittent Internet Connectivity	General	<p><i>"Internet connection isa pud sa problem namo karon sir kay labaw na tong far flung area." FGDP2</i></p> <p><i>(Internet connection is also one of our problems, sir, especially for far-flung areas)</i></p> <p><i>"Dili stable ang signal. Usahay mawala tas kaning naa mi quiz sa Gmeet unya mawala imong signal." FGDP3</i></p> <p><i>(Unstable internet connection. There are times, during a quiz on Gmeet, you will be</i></p>

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Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	Emblematic Quotes
Limited Financial Resources	General	<p><i>disconnected because you lost your signal (internet)</i></p> <p><i>“Unya wala pa jud kay pangload, struggle kayo.” FGDP3</i> (Then I do not have enough money to buy load, it's a struggle)</p> <p><i>“Bayad internet unya lahi pang bayad pa sa pag-eskwela lahi pang bayad sa internet connection murag doble na siya sir ba mao ng nagahatag sya struggle sa akoo.” KIIP2</i> (Payment for internet, and payment for schooling, it seems like my struggles have doubled up)</p>
Uncertainty about the Future	General	<p><i>“Mugraduate na walay ano, walay nasabtan, walay na ano, way way nadala ba.” FGDP2</i> (To graduate without learning, no takeaway).</p> <p><i>“Makahuman ko ani pag eskwela nako nga dili bitaw ko confident sa akong sarili kay tungod dili dili daghan limited lang ako natun-an based ani nga klase nga online online.” KIIP2</i> (To finish my studies without self-confidence because I only gained a limited understanding based on online classes).</p>
Lacking Resources	General	<p><i>“Limited lang amoang mga resources.” KIIP1</i> (Lack of resources).</p> <p><i>“Wala koy laptop dili nako siya ma download so dili ko on time makpasa og mga activities sige rag ka late.” KIIP3</i> (I have no laptop; therefore, I cannot download, so I cannot submit activities on time).</p>
Lacking Experiential Learning	General	<p><i>“Wala mi mashare kay wala man mi na experience.” FGDP3</i> (We cannot share anything because we lack experience).</p> <p><i>“I prefer demonstration because I'm a type of learner na kanang need jud og demonstration para makasabot” FGDP5</i> (I prefer demonstration because I'm the type of learner that needs demonstration to understand).</p> <p><i>“Lisud icope up ang uban subjects kay tungod need siya i-actual.” KIIP1</i> (It's difficult to cope with those subjects that need actual demonstration).</p>

Legend:

General 50% up

Typical 25% - 40%

Variant 20% down

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Table 1 shows the challenges of technical-vocational education students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings reveal that students are facing difficulties with intermittent internet connectivity, limited financial resources, uncertainty about the future, lacking resources, lack of experiential learning, frequent power outage, lacking motivation, dealing with time management is complex, noisy environments, limited knowledge, too much gadget exposure, busy with household chores, lacking computer skills, negligent instructor, technical issue, and lacking in-person interaction.

The participants generally referred to the theme of intermittent internet connection as a dominant perspective, and they all agreed that it affects the synchronous and asynchronous sessions. This is made evident in the following statements.

“Internet connection isa pud sa problem namo karon sir kay labaw na tong far flung area.” FGDP2

(Internet connection is also one of our problems, sir, especially for far-flung areas).

“Dili stable ang signal. Usahay mawala tas kaning naa mi quiz sa Gmeet unya mawala imong signal.” FGDP3

(Unstable internet connection. During a quiz on Gmeet, you will be disconnected because you lost your signal (internet)).

The study’s findings reveal that most technical-vocational students encountered intermittent internet connectivity during the Covid-19 pandemic. Even students living in the suburban community are affected by unstable internet connections.

Technical-Vocational students stated that they experience limited financial resources. Consider the example below.

“Unya wala pa jud kay pangload, struggle kayo.” FGDP3

(Then I do not have enough money to buy a load, it’s a struggle).

“Bayad internet unya lahi pang bayad pa sa pag-eskwela lahi pang bayad sa internet connection murag doble na siya sir ba mao ng nagahatag sya struggle sa akoo.” KIIP2

(Payment for internet and schooling, it seems like my struggles have doubled up).

The participants discussed the uncertainty about the future as one of their challenges. They detailed it by saying.

“Mugraduate na walay ano, walay nasabtan, walay na ano, way way nadala ba.” FGDP2

(To graduate without learning, no takeaway).

“Makahuman ko ani pag eskwela nako nga dili bitaw ko confident sa akong sarili kay tungod dili dili daghan limited lang ako natun-an based ani nga klase nga online online.” KIIP2

(To finish my studies without self-confidence because I only gained a limited understanding based on online classes).

Most of the participants experienced lacking resources. They expressed their view in the following statements.

“Limited lang amoang mga resources.” KIIP1

(Lack of resources).

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“Wala koy laptop dili nako siya ma download so dili ko on time makpasa og mga activities sige rag ka late.”^{KII3}

(I have no laptop; therefore, I cannot download, so I cannot submit activities on time).

“Tapos wala pud koy laptop, nagahiram lang ko sa akong mga relatives, mao na sir, mga resources, kulang.”^{FGDP4}

(Then, I also do not have a laptop; I only borrow one from my relatives. Lacks resources).

The participants also come across as lacking in experiential learning. They revealed the following.

“Wala mi mashare kay wala man mi na experience.”^{FGDP3}

(We cannot share anything because we lack experience).

“I prefer demonstration because I’m a type of learner na kanang need jud og demonstration para makasabot”^{FGDP5}

(I prefer demonstration because I’m the type of learner that needs demonstration to understand).

“Lisud icope up ang uban subjects kay tungod need siya i-actual.”^{KIIP1}

(It’s difficult to cope with those subjects that need actual demonstration).

Table 1 continuation. Challenges of the Technical-Vocational Education Students During Pandemic.

Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	Emblematic Quotes
Frequent Power Outage	Typical	<p><i>“Ga-brownout so kanang kelangan pa nako muadto pa diri sir kanang diri sa Davao.”^{FGDP5}</i></p> <p><i>(Brownout, I have to go here to Davao).</i></p> <p><i>“Sa kurente kung magbrownout labaw nag mga wala ta kacharge.”^{FGDP2}</i></p> <p><i>(Electricity if there is a brownout, especially if the gadgets aren’t charged).</i></p>
Lacking Self-Motivation	Typical	<p><i>“Lack of self-drive, motivation nga kanang mocontinue.”^{FGDP1}</i></p> <p><i>(Lack of self-drive, motivation to continue).</i></p>
Unable to Manage Time	Typical	<p><i>“Tahay mag Gmeet nya katugon kayo ko, laay kaayo maminaw.”^{FGDP3}</i></p> <p><i>(Example we have G-meet and I feel sleepy, I’m not in the mood to listen anymore).</i></p> <p><i>“Pag manage sa time.”^{KII3}</i></p> <p><i>(Time-management).</i></p>
Ambient Noise	Typical	<p><i>“Distraction’s sir kay naa man gud mi silingan diri sir nga (laughs) kanang grabe makavidoeke ba makalagot kaayo.”^{FGDP1}</i></p> <p><i>(Distraction, sir, because we have neighbors singing with videoke, so annoying!).</i></p> <p><i>“Sa silingan nya sigeg vidoeke, sig pud na diri sir, naa man pud na diri, ang kasaba sa</i></p>

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Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	Emblematic Quotes
		<p><i>palibot, ang mga iro, ana nya, mga istorya nga madungog man gyud na storya storya.”</i> FGDP2</p> <p><i>(We also have neighbors who do videoke. The surroundings are noisy, dogs, and can even hear rumors).</i></p>

Legend:

General 50% up

Typical 25% - 40%

Variant 20% down

Typically, the theme is concerned with the frequent power outage. Although our study participants had different challenges, almost one-third agreed with this problem, which they elaborated upon in the following statements.

“Sa kurente kung magbrownout labaw nag mga wala ta kacharge.”
FGDP2

(Electricity if there is a brownout, especially if the gadgets aren't charged).

“Ga-brownout so kanang kelangan pa nako muadto pa diri sir kanang diri sa Davao.” FGDP5

(Brownout, I have to go here to Davao).

Some of the technical-vocational students are anxious about lacking self-motivation. They expressed their view as follows.

“Lack of self-drive, motivation nga kanang mocontinue.” FGDP1
(Lack of self-drive, motivation to continue).

“Tahay mag Gmeet nya katugon kayo ko, laay kaayo maminaw.” FGDP3
(Example we have G-meet and I feel sleepy, I'm not in the mood to listen anymore).

Participants typically referred to the theme of being unable to manage time as one of the struggles faced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The following statements elaborated upon this.

“Pag manage sa time.” KII3
(Time-management).

“Mag abot na gani ang trabahuon sir pag ma overloaded nami.” FGDP2
(We get overloaded because we are bombarded with activities given at the same time).

The theme of ambient noise is another challenge encountered by technical-vocational students. Participants listed some ambient noise they faced during online class, as mentioned in the following statements.

“Distraction's sir kay naa man gud mi silingan diri sir nga {(laughs)} kanang grabe makavidoeke ba makalagot kaayo.” FGDP1
(Distraction, sir, because we have neighbors singing with videoke, so annoying!).

“Sa silingan nya sigeg vidoeke, sig pud na diri sir, naa man man pud na diri, ang kasaba sa palibot, ang mga iro, ana nya, mga istorya nga madungog man gyud na storya storya.” FGDP2

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(We also have neighbors who do videoke. The surroundings are noisy, dogs, and can even hear rumors).

Technical-vocational students' exposure to gadgets faced during the pandemic is discussed under too much gadget exposure theme. Participants listed their experiences, as mentioned in the following statements.

“Kanang sgeg atubang gadget sir, kapoya, sakit sakit sa mata, makalabad og ulo.” FGDP3

(Always exposed to gadgets, so tiring, irritating the eyes, and causes headache).

“Tibuok adlaw ba magtutok lang ko sa akong gadget” FGDP4

(I am exposed to the gadget the whole day).

Table 1 continuation. Challenges of the Technical-Vocational Education Students During Pandemic.

Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	of	Emblematic Quotes
Too Much Gadget Exposure	Typical		<p><i>“Kanang sgeg atubang gadget sir, kapoya, sakit sakit sa mata, makalabad og ulo.” FGDP3</i> <i>(Always exposed to gadgets, so tiring, irritating the eyes, and causes headache).</i> <i>“Tibuok adlaw ba magtutok lang ko sa akong gadget” FGDP4</i> <i>(I am exposed to the gadget the whole day).</i></p>
Busy with Household Chores	Typical		<p><i>“Kung naa ka sa balay dili lang man ang imong priority kay imong eskwela kay naa gud ka sa balay, meaning naa pud kay mga responsibilities sa mga household chores so murag lisod sya i-manage.” FGDP1</i> <i>(If you are in the house, your studies are not only your priority because you are at home, meaning you also have responsibilities for doing household chores, so it's challenging to manage).</i></p>
Lacking Computer Skills	Variant		<p><i>“Computer literacy kanang usahay sa amo dili man gyud tanan nga makabalo mag operate og kanang mga example Microsoft word or excel nay kasagaran mga estudyante nga dili hanas ana nga mga butang.” KIIP2</i> <i>(Regarding computer literacy, others do not know how to operate Microsoft word or excel and are incompetent).</i></p>
Neglectful Instructor	Variant		<p><i>“Murag Youtube lang ilang ginabala or kanang Google lang nga wala silay ilahang sariling ginatuon mao ng kami gapaningkamot pud nga magtuon based atong nga gihatag nila nga mga record sa Youtube or Google ingana sir bah” KIIP2</i> <i>(It's like they give us YouTube or google because they do not have their learning. We strive to learn on our own from YouTube and google).</i></p>
Technical Issue	Variant		<p><i>“Lag jud kaayo akong cellphone sir.” FGDP1</i> <i>(My cellphone does not respond immediately).</i> <i>“Dali kaayo ko mistress sir, mao jud na</i></p>

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Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	Emblematic Quotes
Lacking In-person Interaction	Variant	<i>akong struggle na kuan sir kay wala man gud ko maistoryahan sir kay ako ra isa diri sa balay.</i> ^{FGDP1} (I easily get stressed because I have no one to talk to at home).

Legend:

General 50% up

Typical 25% - 40%

Variant 20% down

The theme of being busy with household chores was considered a challenge by some students during the pandemic. The following statements elaborated upon this.

“Kung naa ka sa balay dili lang man ang imong priority kay imong eskwela kay naa gud ka sa balay, meaning naa pud kay mga responsibilities sa mga household chores so murag lisod sya i-manage.” ^{FGDP1}

(If you are in the house, your studies are not only your priority because you are at home, meaning you also have responsibilities for doing household chores, so it’s challenging to manage).

“Di nako mamanager akong oras tungod sa mga ah trabaho diri sa balay” ^{FGDP4}

(I cannot manage my time because of household chores)

The variant challenges faced by the participants are discussed under the lacking computer skills theme. This includes essential elements in manipulating basic computer applications, such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft PowerPoint. They detailed it by saying:

“Computer literacy kanang usahay sa amo dili man gyud tanan nga makabalo mag operate og kanang mga example Microsoft word or excel nay kasagaran mga estudyante nga dili hanas ana nga mga butang.” ^{KIIP2}

(Regarding computer literacy, others do not know to operate Microsoft word or excel and are incompetent).

Additionally, variant challenges experienced by the participants are explained under the neglectful instructor theme. This includes how the instructor handles the synchronous and asynchronous class during the Covid-19 pandemic. Consider the example below.

“Murag Youtube lang ilang ginabala or kanang Google lang nga wala silay ilahang sariling ginatuon mao ng kami gapaningkamot pud nga magtuon based atong nga gihatag nila nga mga record sa Youtube or Google ingana sir bah” ^{KIIP2}

(It’s like they give us YouTube or google because they do not have their learning. We strive to learn on our own from YouTube and google).

Furthermore, technical issues are one of the various challenges of technical-vocational students during the pandemic. They detailed it by saying:

“Lag jud kaayo akong cellphone sir.” ^{FGDP1}

(My cellphone does not respond immediately).

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Moreover, variant challenges lacking in-person interaction are experienced during the pandemic. One participant stated:

“Dali kaayo ko mistress sir, mao jud na akong struggle na kuan sir kay wala man gud ko maistoryahan sir kay ako ra isa diri sa balay.” FGDP1
(I easily get stressed because I have no one to talk to at home).

The study revealed that most participants encountered intermittent internet connectivity due to problems with internet networks in our country. Generally, limited financial resources are caused by unemployed parents, self-supporting students, and belongs to low-income families—uncertainty about the future due to a lack of knowledge and skills. Furthermore, they are unable to acquire resources due to financial difficulties. Technical-vocational students are lacking with experiential learning and hands-on experience in online classes. The distant learning approach is not a substitute for hands-on training.

Typically, frequent power outages are experienced by some technical-vocational students due to current power supply problems in some of the areas of the city. The study reveals that some technical-vocational students lack self-motivation due to the ample number of activities. Some cannot manage time due to conflicting activities; others experience ambient noise and distractions caused by neighbors and other environmental noise. Furthermore, technical-vocational students are busy with household chores while attending synchronous and asynchronous classes.

The variant challenges include lacking computer skills study reveals that some technical-vocational students lack knowledge and skill in manipulating basic computer applications such as MS Word, MS PowerPoint, and MS Excel. Additionally, some students experienced neglectful instructors who did not handle the class professionally and effectively. Moreover, some encountered technical issues like lag in laptops and cellular phones. Finally, lacking in-person interaction, one of the participants lacks socialization with other individuals considering that she is only alone in her residence.

Technical vocational education has confronted challenges amid the crisis. Most outstandingly, the computerized learning situations that most education institutions had to depend on amid closures don't work as well for practice-oriented learning, a central component of technical vocational education for academic learning. Salac and Kim (2016) stated that lack of competition in the Internet connectivity market is at the root of slow and costly internet connectivity. Regarding internet connection speed, the Philippines is one of the slowest countries. The average connection speed in the Philippines was only 2.8 Mbps, eight times lower than in South Korea. Rotas and Cahapay (2020) mentioned that poor network connectivity, inadequate educational resources, power outages, vague learning contents, overfilled lesson activities, limited instructor scaffolds, poor social communication, conflict with household obligations, bad learning environment, financial problems, overall health compromises, and mental health struggles all are illustrations of remote learning problems encountered.

The mechanism of internet networks emanates at a high price. The challenges in schooling that have arisen due to the Covid-19 outbreak must be a significant for both the national and municipal administrations (Batubara, 2021). Designing student assessments first when creating curricula helps teachers focus. Once the pandemic is finished, this viewpoint suggests various approaches to repair the damage to learners learning list of resources (Daniel, 2020).

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Hands-on learning in-school workshops, laboratories and hands-on experience on the job are common ways to develop practical skills. Distance learning isn't a good substitute for hands-on training if you need to use equipment or supplies that aren't generally found at home. Real-world training can be mimicked remotely in some situations and vocations, such as virtual or augmented reality experiences. However, the technical-vocational programs that rely primarily on hands-on learning are the most challenging to adapt to distant learning (Hoftijzer, Levin, Santos, & Weber, 2020).

This has been a big struggle, especially for science, technology, and engineering classes, where distance learning hasn't always been the best option. This was mainly because a considerable portion of the students' experimental laboratory work, which might account for up to half of all contact hours, was done in the classroom. The lectures were used almost soon after the lockdown, utilizing video conferencing capabilities, while the workshop content was more challenging to implement (NovakPintarič & Kravanja, 2020). Lack of student encouragement and career guidance, stigma toward TVET education, lecturer competency, and inadequate infrastructure resources in TVET are issues that have arisen in TVET education over time. In contrast, internet access issues, learning platforms, curriculum and evaluation content, and the preparedness of trainers and trainees for e-learning have been discussed as challenges of TVET education during the COVID-19 pandemic (Yeap, Suhaim & Nasir 2021). Nonetheless, weak infrastructures such as networks, electricity, poor accessibility and unavailability problems, and a lack of digital competencies have impeded online education (Onyema, Eucheria, Obafemi, Sen, Atonye, Sharma & Alsayed, 2020).

Table 2. Interventions to the Challenges.

Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	Emblematic Quotes
Resourceful Individuals	General	<p><i>“Lack of resources kanang materials naga search nalang jud ko sa internet sir kung unsa na siya and kung naay time nagaadto ko sa mga shop or sa mga hardware kay gusto lang nako siya makita unsa dagway niya so ingana mao lang sir.”^{KIIP1}</i></p> <p><i>(Regarding lack of resources, I search the internet if I have time and go to shops or hardware to see these resources personally).</i></p> <p><i>“Akong gihimo kay akung gipun-an ang akung mga kulang nga dapat nako tun-an unya mao to based sa kuan mga actual na mga himuonon naga taw-aw tan-aw lang ko og youtube para at least makita nako siya sa video.”^{KIIP2}</i></p> <p><i>(What I do is fill in the gaps that I should learn by watching videos from youtube).</i></p>

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Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	Emblematic Quotes
Nurturing Spiritual Faith	General	<p>“Isa ka way para masurpass nako mga challenges prayer jud.” ^{KIIP1} (One way to surpass the challenges is through prayer)</p> <p>“When I am down, I pray, and everything will be easier.” ^{FGDP5}</p> <p>“Faith lang jud sa taas kay uh isalig lang jud nato ai isalig lang jud nako tanan sa iyaha kay syempre, sa iyaha kay wala may imposible jud.” ^{FGDP1} (Have faith in him because, with him, nothing is impossible).</p>
Able to organize tasks	General	<p>“I-outline namo ang mga buhatunon.” ^{FGDP3} (I outline my tasks).</p> <p>“naga set kog date kung unsa na module dapat akong na achieve.” ^{FGDP4} (I ensure I set my modules to what I should answer first before answering them).</p>

Legend:

General 50% up

Typical 25% - 40%

Variant 20% down

Table 2. Presents the interventions to address the challenges. Findings revealed that students surpass the challenges by being resourceful individuals, nurturing spiritual faith, being able to organize tasks, tending to socialize, able to think positively, fostering mental and physical health, engaging in recreational activities, fostering self-motivation, adaptable to the current situation, determined to finish studies and sentimental feeling towards family. Participants generally referred to the theme of resourceful individuals as a dominant perspective, and they agreed that there are ways to be creative to address the problems. This is made evident in the following statements.

“Lack of resources kanang materials naga search nalang jud ko sa internet sir kung unsa na siya and kung naay time nagaadto ko sa mga shop or sa mga hardware kay gusto lang nako siya makita unsa dagway niya so ingana mao lang sir.” ^{KIIP1}

(Regarding lack of resources, I search the internet if I have time and go to shops or hardware to see these resources personally).

“Akong gihimo kay akung gipun-an ang akung mga kulang nga dapat nako tun-an unya mao to based sa kuan mga actual na mga himuonon naga taw-aw tan-aw lang ko og youtube para at least makita nako siya sa video.” ^{KIIP2}

(What I do is fill in the gaps that I should learn by watching videos from youtube).

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Nurturing spiritual faith is one of the favored interventions of technical-vocational students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Under this theme, participants expressed the following views.

“Isa ka way para masurpass nako mga challenges prayer jud.” ^{KIIP1}

(One way to surpass the challenges is through prayer)

“When I am down, I pray, and then everything will be easier.” ^{FGDP5}

“Faith lang jud sa taas kay uh isalig lang jud nato ai isalig lang jud nako tanan sa iyaha kay syempre, sa iyaha kay wala may imposible jud.” ^{FGDP1}

(Just have faith in him, because, with him, nothing is impossible)

Able to organize tasks emerged as the third theme favored. Participants stated the following.

“I-outline namo ang mga buhatunon.” ^{FGDP3}

(I outline my tasks).

“Naga set kog date kung unsa na module dapat akong na achieve.”

^{FGDP4}

(I ensure I set my modules to what I should answer first before answering them).

Table 2 continuation. Interventions to the Challenges.

Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	Emblematic Quotes
Tending to Socialize	General	<p><i>“Mangita og kuan sir kaistorya or kanang kanang mugawas ba ka sa balay.”</i> ^{FGDP2} <i>(I go outside our house to look for somebody to talk to).</i></p> <p><i>“Makipagtabi sa mga classmates, mga barkada.”</i> ^{FGDP3} <i>(Talk to classmates and friends).</i></p> <p><i>“Sa akoa kay makigstorya man gyud ko sa akong ginikanan, parents, kana sa akong mama kay bibes man kaayo mi ana, ug akong nanay nako, sa ilaha nako ginashare mga thoughts.”</i> ^{FGDP4} <i>(I talk and share my thoughts with my parents, especially my mom, because we are close to my grandmother).</i></p>
Able to think positively	General	<p><i>“Dapat think positive ta murag bag bahalag unsay mahitabo basta ano lang think positive lang ta.”</i> ^{FGDP2} <i>(For, whatever happens, we should always think positively).</i></p> <p><i>“Dili mawad an og paglaom.”</i> ^{FGDP4} <i>(Do not lose hope).</i></p> <p><i>“Pag once nga kuan sir kapuyon nako sir kanang magpahuway ra sir.”</i> ^{FGDP2} <i>(If I get tired, I take a rest).</i></p>
Fostering Mental and Physical Health	General	<p><i>Usahay di man jud malikayan kapuyon, so magpahuway”</i> ^{FGDP3} <i>(Sometimes, we cannot avoid being tired so I take a rest).</i></p> <p><i>“Sahay pud mag gitara gitara pud ko sir kay kabalo man pud ko mugitara.”</i> ^{FGDP3}</p>

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Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	Emblematic Quotes
Engaging in Recreational Activities	General	<p><i>(Sometimes I play guitar since I know how to play guitar).</i></p> <p><i>“Google and then social media like Facebook, nya dancing ug music.” FGDP5</i> <i>(Google, social media like Facebook, dancing, and listening to music).</i> <i>“Maminaw lang ko og mga sa podcast gani sir kanang mga kuan dira, motivational na mga kuan mga audios” FGDP1</i> <i>(I just listened to a podcast about audios on motivation).</i> <i>“Self-motivation pud sir kanang para motivate ang kaugalingon” FGDP4</i> <i>(Self-motivation).</i></p>
Fostering Self-Motivation	General	<p><i>(I go outside our house to look for somebody to talk to).</i> <i>“Makipagtabi sa mga classmates, mga barkada.” FGDP2S3</i> <i>(Talk to classmates and friends).</i> <i>“Sa akong kay makigstorya man gyud ko sa akong ginikanan, parents, kana sa akong mama kay bibes man kaayo mi ana, ug akong nanay nako, sa ilaha nako ginashare mga thoughts.” FGDP2S4</i> <i>(I talk and share my thoughts with my parents, especially my mom, because we are close, and my grandmother).</i></p>

Legend:

General 50% up

Typical 25% - 40%

Variant 20% down

Tending to socialize is considered a coping mechanism by technical-vocational students. Participants listed interventions as mentioned in the following statements.

“Mangita og kuan sir kasitorya or kanang kanang mugawas ba ka sa balay.” FGDP2S2

(I go outside our house to look for somebody to talk to).

“Makipagtabi sa mga classmates, mga barkada.” FGDP2S3

(Talk to classmates and friends).

“Sa akong kay makigstorya man gyud ko sa akong ginikanan, parents, kana sa akong mama kay bibes man kaayo mi ana, ug akong nanay nako, sa ilaha nako ginashare mga thoughts.” FGDP2S4

(I talk and share my thoughts with my parents, especially my mom, because we are close, and my grandmother).

Able to think positively is discussed to surpass the challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. The following statements elaborated upon this.

“Dapat think positive ta murag bag bahalag unsay mahitabo basta ano lang think positive lang ta.” FGDP2

(For, whatever happens, we should always think positively).

“Dili mawad an og paglaom.” FGDP4

(Do not lose hope).

Findings reveal that the participants consider fostering mental and physical health a coping mechanism to surpass the challenges. Participants stated the following.

“Pag once nga kuan sir kapuyon nako sir kanang magpahuway ra sir.” FGDP2

(If I get tired, I take a rest).

Usahay di man jud malikayan kapuyon, so magpahuway” FGDP3

(Sometimes, we cannot avoid being tired, so I take a rest).

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Engaging in recreational activities handles participants' struggles and difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic. They detailed it by saying.

“Sahay pud mag gitara gitara pud ko sir kay kabalo man pud ko mugitara.” FGDP3

(Sometimes I play guitar since I know how to play guitar).

“Google and then social media like Facebook, nya dancing ug music.” FGDP5

(Google, social media like Facebook, dancing, and listening to music).

Technical-vocational students stated that fostering self-motivation is their intervention to overcome challenges. Consider the example below.

“Maminaw lang ko og mga sa podcast gani sir kanang mga kuan dira, motivational na mga kuan mga audios” FGDP1

(I just listened to a podcast about audios on motivation).

“Self-motivation pud sir kanang para motivate ang kaugalingon” FGDP4

(Self-motivation).

Table 2 Continuation Interventions to the Challenges.

Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	Emblematic Quotes
Adaptable to the Current Situation	Typical	<p><i>“Learn to adopt na lang gyud sa ing ani na situation sa set up sa learning.” FGDP4</i> <i>(Learn to adapt to this situation in this learning setup).</i></p> <p><i>“I-adopt na lang gyud ang situation karon tungod sa pandemic.” FGDP5</i> <i>(To adapt to the situation now because of the pandemic).</i></p>
Determined to Finish Studies	Variant	<p><i>“Pursigido lang gyud na makahuman.” FGDP4</i> <i>(Very eager to finish studies).</i></p>
Sentimental Feeling Towards Family	Variant	<p><i>“Inspirasyon nako, syempre, kana, pamilya.” FGDP3</i> <i>(My family is my inspiration).</i></p>

Legend:

General 50% up

Typical 25% - 40%

Variant 20% down

Typically, some of the participants are adaptable to the current situation. They revealed the following.

“Learn to adopt na lang gyud sa ing ani na situation sa set up sa learning.” FGDP4
(Learn to adapt to this situation in this learning setup).

“I-adopt na lang gyud ang situation karon tungod sa pandemic.” FGDP5
(To adapt to the situation now because of the pandemic).

They were determined to finish studies identified by the participants as one of the variants of the study. Under this theme, participants expressed their views.

“Pursigido lang gyud na makahuman.” FGDP4
(Very eager to finish studies).

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Lastly, sentimental feelings towards family. A participant expressed their ideas about these interventions as follows.

“Inspirasyon nako, syempre, kana, pamilya.” FGDP3
(My family is my inspiration).

This study found the themes of resourceful individuals, nurturing spiritual faith, and being able to organize tasks as the three highest-ranking interventions. These themes tended to be more general among the participants. In this study, growing to socialize was the fourth most common intervention during the Covid-19 pandemic. Participants in this study most often mentioned coping mechanisms included being resourceful, praying, talking with family members and friends, and thinking positively.

Interestingly, a few students revealed that they are determined to finish their studies and consider their family an inspiration. Even though variant in nature, these coping mechanisms need to be further explored in future research. Traditionally, “engaging in recreational activities” is found in coping mechanism interviews, yet this result does not belong to the three interventions. Self-motivation was also commonly mentioned as being able to think positively, relax and sleep. However, Barrot, Llenares, and Del Rosario (2021) described that College students faced a wide range of online learning problems, both in nature and scope. Their greatest obstacle was related to their learning environment at home, whereas their most significant challenge was technical knowledge and skills. The COVID-19 pandemic seemed to have the most critical influence on the quality of learning and the emotional wellness of learners.

Table 3 Expectations of Students Towards the Instructors.

Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	of	Emblematic Quotes
			<p><i>“Ihatag nila tanan ilang mga kahibalo.” KIIP2</i> (They would teach all that they know).</p>
Helpful to Students to Learn		General	<p><i>“Kanang dili dalo og kaalam kanang magshare gyud siya sa mga natun an, sa mga ideas, so from that kay maka makatuon pud mi.” FGDP3</i> (One who is not selfish and will share his knowledge and ideas, in that way, we may also learn).</p>
Good Class Managers		General	<p><i>“Kanang organize sya sa iyahang teaching method.” FGDP4</i> (Organized in his teaching method).</p> <p><i>“Well-equipped ug and naay good sense of direction.” FGDP2</i> (Well-organized and has a good sense of direction).</p>
Approachable and Friendly		General	<p><i>“Available, approachable.” FGDP4</i> (Available and approachable).</p> <p><i>“But-an, kanang approachable sya” FGDP3</i> (They are friendly and approachable).</p> <p><i>“Considerate pud siya, so, since kay</i></p>

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Challenges	Frequency of Occurrence	Emblematic Quotes
Considerate and Devoted Instructor	General	<p><i>pandemic man ron.</i>” FGDP5 (He is also considerate since it is a pandemic).</p> <p>“Dedicated sa ilahang pagtudlo.” FGDP1 (Dedicated in teaching).</p> <p>“Masinabtanon og naay consideration.” KIIP1 (Understanding and considerate). “Akong gina anticipate sa ilaha kay role model.” FGDP1 (I am anticipating that they would be role models).</p>
Good Role Model	Typical	<p>“Kanang good model sya as a teacher.” FGDP3 (A teacher who is a good role model). “Kanang teacher na naay sense of humor nga kabalo mu biskan simple joke.” FGDP2 (A teacher with a sense of humor and simple jokes).</p>
Good Sense of Humor	Typical	<p>“Kanang naay sense of humor.” FGDP1 (One who has a sense of humor).</p>

Legend:

General 50% up

Typical 25% - 40%

Variant 20% down

Table 3 shows the expectations of students towards the instructors. Findings reveal that the general expectation is helpful to students to learn, good class managers, approachable and friendly, considerate and devoted instructors, good role models, and a good sense of humor. Participants generally referred to the theme helpful to students to learn as a dominant perspective. This is made evident in the following statements.

“Ihatag nila tanan ilang mga kahibalo.” KIIP2

(They would teach all that they know).

“Kanang dili dalo og kaalam kanang magshare gyud siya sa mga natun an, sa mga ideas, so from that kay maka makatuon pud mi.” FGDP3

(One who is not selfish and will share his knowledge and ideas, in that way, we may also learn).

It also emerged from the interviews that the students expect their instructors to help and guide them in learning. Instructors also strongly influence student experience, mainly through their accessibility and efforts to provide opportunities to connect with peers.

Most of the participants expect their instructor to be a good class manager. They expressed their view in the following statements.

“Kanang organize sya sa iyahang teaching method.” FGDP4

(Organized in his teaching method).

“Well-equipped ug and naay good sense of direction.” FGDP2

(Well-organized and has a good sense of direction).

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Students don't like teachers who prefer a particular student to themselves. They want an instructor who can lead his class and show that he is the ship's captain.

Generally, the theme is concerned with approachable and friendly instructors. Although our study participants had different expectations, one-half of them agreed with these traits, which they elaborated upon in the following statements.

"Available, approachable." FGDP4

(Available and approachable).

"But-an, kanang approachable sya" FGDP3

(They are friendly and approachable).

An important theme that emerged from the data was the approachable and friendly instructor, and whether an instructor was approachable and friendly strongly influenced the student experience.

The participants described a considerate and devoted instructor to technical-vocational students. They detailed it by saying:

"Considerate pud siya, so, since kay pandemic man ron." FGDP5

(He is also considerate since it is a pandemic).

"Dedicated sa ilahang pagtudlo." FGDP1

(Dedicated to teaching).

"Masinabtanon og naay consideration." KIIP1

(Understanding and considerate).

Typically, some participants expect their instructor to be a good role model. They revealed the following.

"Akong gina anticipate sa ilaha kay role model." FGDP1

(I am anticipating that they would be role models).

"Kanang good model sya as a teacher." FGDP3

(A teacher who is a good role model).

Technical-vocational students stated that a good sense of humor is one of their expectations towards instructors. Consider the example below.

"Kanang teacher na naay sense of humor nga kabalo mu biskan simple joke." FGDP2

(A teacher with a sense of humor and simple jokes).

"Kanang naay sense of humor." FGDP1

(One who has a sense of humor).

Inspiring learners entails the teacher guiding them through the process. Challenge them to complete their work, whether a class project or an assignment. A positive learning environment is ensured by honest class management and discipline. In the process of education and learning, classroom management is the foundation for empowering teaching and learning. Teachers are in charge of planning, developing measures and resources, creating an environment that maximizes effectiveness, assessing student development, and anticipating potential issues. Instructors must provide students with specific and clear directions and communicate effectively to maintain active management in the classroom (Gujjar & Choudhry, 2009). Instructor facilitation, such as prompt responses to queries and timely feedback on assignments, is critical in establishing instructor presence, increasing student engagement in their classes, and promoting more significant levels of learning (Hodges & Cowan, 2012).

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The current study explores the challenges, interventions, and expectations towards instructors that students experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings revealed that the learning challenges of technical-vocational students varied in terms of type and extent. Their greatest challenge was intermittent internet connectivity, limited financial resources, and uncertainty about the future, while their most minor challenge was lacking in-person interaction. Furthermore, the interventions of technical-vocational students revealed that their most excellent interventions were associated with resourceful individuals, nurturing spiritual faith, and being able to organize tasks. In contrast, their most minor intervention is sentimental feelings towards family. Lastly, the expectations of students towards instructors/teachers show that their greatest expectations were linked to helping students learn, good class managers, and being approachable and friendly, while their least expected is the challenging instructor.

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