Perceived challenges among campus press at the height of the pandemic

Rowanne Marie Mangompit[1], Junas Flores[1*], Cristie Ann Jaca[1]

[1]Cebu Technological University, Cebu City, Philippines
*Corresponding author: junas.flores@ctu.edu.ph

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has created various challenges that allowed academic stakeholders to reflect on the concerns encountered by school administrators, teachers, and students. Many studies focused on the challenges of professional journalists. However, only a few studies on student journalists were explored. In this regard, this study aimed to describe and analyze the challenges of student journalists at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. A qualitative research design was used in this research. Grounded in this study were the student journalists' personal experiences and narration of their expressed challenges as writers of the Nation Builder, the official student publication of a state university. Thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Model was used to analyze the qualitative data gathered. Findings show that there were five identified themes such as health-related issues, ICT-related issues, connectivity-related issues, adaptability-related issues, and journalism-related issues. There are action plans that need to be implemented to sustain the interest of student journalists to write newsworthy articles. Training programs and capacity-building activities could be organized to boost the confidence of the students in coping with the pandemic.

1. Introduction

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the academic community has experienced various concerns yet managed to maximize learning outcomes. While the educational community has made concerted efforts to maintain learning, the pandemic has also impacted students, especially student journalists. The school's student publication serves as a platform for community discussion and a place for those interested in writing and developing their skills. Like students in other schools and universities globally, the student journalists of the state university in Cebu, Philippines, were not exempted from these challenges brought about by the global health dilemma. State university students in this country grapple with challenges such as poor internet connection and limited economic capabilities (Jaca, 2022).

This research is anchored on the Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Knowledge Gap Theory.

First, the diffusion of innovation theory was developed by E.M. Rogers, a communication theorist at the University of New Mexico, in 1962 (Halton, 2022). This theory explains the behavior of people towards a new idea in technology, the process of adaptation to it, and how innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members. New ideas and innovations frighten people and cause frustration due to the fear that new ideas may fail. It explains the passage of an idea through stages of adoption by different actors. The main people in

the diffusion of innovations theory are identified as follows: *innovators* (i.e., people who are open to risks and the first to try new ideas), *early adopters* (i.e., people who are interested in trying new technologies and establishing their utility in society), and the *early majority* (i.e., those who pave the way for use of innovation within mainstream society and are part of the general population. The other groups include the *late majority* (i.e., people who follow the early majority into adopting the innovation as part of their daily life while *laggards* (i.e., people who lag behind the general population in adopting innovative products and new ideas). This is primarily because they are risk-averse and set in their ways of doing things. Eventually, the sweep of innovation through mainstream society makes it impossible for them to conduct their daily life (and work) without it. As a result, they are forced to begin using it.

In relation to this study, this theory will help analyze the behavior of student journalists toward the new normal way of communication which is considered technology-mediated. When face-to-face classes shifted to online modality, students were shocked by the sudden changes. The news-gathering modes have changed. Interviewing the subject of their article is done online instead of face-to-face. It caused frustration to the student journalists due to the fear that the new mode may fail. This theory will help analyze if the students acted as *innovators* who are open to risk or new ideas or as *laggards* who are not adopting the new ideas.

The second theory used in this study is the knowledge gap theory. This theory was first conceptualized by well-known researchers such as Philip J. Tichenor, George A. Donohue, and Cleric N. Olien at the University of Minnesota in the year 1970. This theory explains that there is a divide between persons belonging to the lower class and those from the higher socio-economic status (Robert & Augustine, 2019). As mass media information in a society increases, those with higher socio-economic status acquire this information faster than low socioeconomic status ones.

In relation to this study, this theory will help determine and analyze if the socioeconomic status of the student journalists has something to do with their accessibility and promptness of acquiring the information. These respondents are studying in a state university and the majority of them belong to the lower class. Some of them lack gadgets and internet load. With the help of this theory, we can analyze if these problems affect their news-gathering activities such as attending virtual press conferences and conducting online interviews given that they lack resources.

Meanwhile, the newsgathering methods have changed since online communication dominated due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The concept of the disaster communicative ecology model, it discusses the resources and information individuals use before, during, and after a disaster (Spialek, Czlapinski, & Houston, 2016). Through communication networks, people get the essential resources to grasp uncertain situations, organize collective action, and achieve goals of various kinds (Liu, Xu, & John, 2021).

Using more communication resources could give information triangulation which can provide an individual with more confidence that the information received is accurate and trustworthy (Greyson, 2018). While journalists, like any individuals, must adapt to crises and disasters, the Covid-19 communication ecology provides an environment where new norms and practices can be established and tried out, and perhaps innovated. This innovation is not new to the pandemic, but rather it results in journalists' seeking to establish practices focused on the four key principles: "research, a commitment to freedom of speech, a dedication to the pursuit of truth and accuracy in reporting, and ethics" (Pavlik, 2013, p. 181). From these lenses, journalism situates itself in an environment not only of solid foundations but also of newly-found fluctuation.

There have been studies on journalism and the impact of Covid-19 on the practice of journalism locally and internationally. Aboagye, Yawson, and Appiah (2020) determined the struggles of technology-mediated learning and journalism in higher education due to the pandemic. Social, teacher and learner, connectivity, academic, demographics, and generic issues surfaced from the qualitative research. Hence, scaffolding is very essential in this remote online learning during the pandemic through providing resources and capacity-building activities in training both faculty and students on the modern ICT tools used in classes.

Further, the proposition for children's writing was investigated (Skar, Graham, & Huebner, 2021). They analogize the writing prowess, handwriting fluidness, and attitude toward the writing of Grade 1 learners in Norway at the height of the coronavirus disease pandemic (396 males and 421 females) with the Grade 1 learners in similar schools one year before the global health crisis started (801 males and 835 females). Results showed that the Grade 1 students attending writing classes at the height of the global health disaster got lower ratings for writing prowess, handwriting fluidness, and attitude toward writing than their Grade 1 peer who were diagnosed one year before the pandemic. Several influencing factors were figured out such as the presumed negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and emergency remote instruction on teaching. The other factors included stress, the possibility that teacher factor due to the inability to use digital resources optimally when providing emergency remote instruction online despite the presence of digital infrastructure and minimal mentor interaction, the small number of hours allocated to learning, and a weakening learners' writing since the discontinuance of face-to-face classes. In a similar vein, the students found the Covid-19 pandemic as a source of stress which could be an issue in adaptability in the new learning setup done online remotely.

In their letter to the editor, the multiple factors that contributed to students' distress during this pandemic were found (Grubic, Badovinac, & Johri, 2020). However, there remains much to be learned about the psychological impacts facing students and what can be done to reduce their negative effects. They suggested prioritizing studies on the student's mental health including the disturbances to educational progress, adaptations of habitual coping strategies and approaches academic institutions have taken to reduce adverse academic and psychosocial outcomes. These initiatives could aid the student-centered support programs as well as mitigate the long-term negative implications for student education and mental health. Similarly, the present study also determined the perceived challenges of student journalists as a basis for developing training programs that mitigate the Covid-19 pandemic's negative effects on education and campus journalism.

The discursive construction of journalism was explored with the disaster communication ecology framework during the Covid-19 crisis using interviews with journalists from the United States journalism trade press using the Discourses of Journalism Database (Perreault & Perreault, 2021). Results showed that journalists placed themselves in a responsible but vulnerable position within the communication ecology and environmental conditions. Journalists found their reporting challenging during the pandemic. The journalists also sought to mitigate the forces challenging their work and to reverse the flow of misinformation. This is also similar to the student journalists as they had to adapt to the situation during the lockdown and covering events in the university became challenging, especially for photojournalists.

In addition, journalism and the pandemic project were conducted (Posetti, Bell, & Brown, 2022). It is a collaborative research initiative by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) and the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University spearheaded. Results of the initial findings based on an analysis of 1,406 vetted survey completions, many journalists were at great

personal risk and were struggling to cope. Seventy percent of the respondents rated the psychological and emotional impacts of dealing with the Covid-19 crisis as the most difficult aspect of their work. A similar number identified concerns about financial hardship as a significant difficulty while the intense workload was ranked the third biggest challenge, ahead of social isolation and the risk of actually contracting the virus. These implied that employers were failing to adequately support them, not only in the area of mental health but in providing protective equipment against Covid-19. Although student journalists and professional journalists were affected by the pandemic concerning their mental health, the respondents of the present study covered the events at the university when they were locked down and restricted from fieldwork.

The new challenges of journalism during the Covid-19 pandemic include prevalent health disinformation and personal data (Bernadas & Ilagan, 2020). Furthermore, the reporters should oppose the wider structural contexts of closure not only of the conventional and popular media but also local print media that provide important and serious information of health crises. The overlooked public health and journalism were also mentioned in this paper which provided recommendations for having dialogue among journalists, policymakers, and healthcare professionals in enhancing public health services delivery and advancing health reporting to refrain from fake news.

On the contrary, most of the reviewed studies were on the challenges of media practitioners. There was a dearth of study on the challenges faced by student writers, especially in the Philippine setting. In this regard, the present study would like to fill in this research gap by determining the challenges of student journalists which were not explored yet. This study attempted to contribute to the attainment of sustainable development goal 3 on the well-being of campus press at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is indeed very essential to determine the challenges of the student journalists because they are the voices of the students of the university and providers of information and updates on university students' events together with the Center for Communication and Media of the said state university. This research aimed to provide an analysis of the challenges of campus journalists at the height of the global health dilemma. The results of this research will serve as the basis for developing a training program for these aforementioned student journalists. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions: (i) What are the challenges encountered by the Nation Builders, student journalists of a state university in Cebu City? and (ii) Based on the findings, what program initiatives can be developed?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

The study was a mixed-method research that employed the qualitative research design since the challenges encountered by the student journalists were categorized by themes. The study was based on the student journalists' personal experiences and narration of their expressed challenges and opportunities as writers of the **Nation Builder**, the official student publication of a state university. The data were collected from 55 student journalists who answered the researcher-made survey form via a Google form. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the participants.

2.2. Research environment

A state university in Cebu, Philippines is the venue of this study. It consists of student journalists across campuses to document events aside from student publications.

2.3. Research respondents

There were twenty-four student journalists of **The Nation Builder**, the official student Publication of the state university, who were asked to answer the researchers-made survey questionnaire through Google Forms. The respondents were from the editorial board and different departments of the student publication namely: News, Feature, Multimedia, Circulation, and Creative and Special Pages. Out of the 24 respondents, four Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies, a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering, and two students from the following programs joined the **Nation Builder,** namely, BS Psychology, BIT, BS Computer Engineering, BS Development Communication and Bachelor of Arts in Literature. Concerning the channels of communication, all of the student journalists' understudy used Facebook Messenger, E-mail, and their cellular phone numbers in communication.

2.4. Research instruments

A researchers-made survey questionnaire was used to solicit information among student journalists based on their profiles and the challenges encountered at the height of the coronavirus disease global health crisis. To disseminate the main instrument of this study, Google Forms were prepared.

2.5. Research procedures

These are the steps in gathering the data. First, the student journalists were assessed why they had a problem in the submission of their articles for the university website and in communicating with one another. Second, a survey questionnaire was prepared with a cover letter to seek consent from the concerned student journalists. Third, consent was sought before distributing the questionnaire through the Google form to the student journalists. Fourth, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Fifth, the answers were tallied, coded, tabulated, interpreted, and analyzed. The collected responses from Google Forms were collated on a table. Similar answers were identified and gathered in one column and came up with a theme. The number of similar responses or challenges that belong to one theme was counted and summarized as reflected in Table 1 in the discussion. The coding sheet revealed the following themes based on the evident challenges shared by the respondents: health, adaptability, connectivity, journalism, finances, and information, communication, and technology. The researchers extracted sample answers from the respondents in each revealed theme and used them to enrich the discussion and interpretation of data. The related studies and literature were used to support the data gathered.

3. Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations were demonstrated by seeking consent from the student journalists. Their participation was voluntary and their names were optionally written in the survey questionnaire. The data were only shared among the researchers and secured in a folder with restricted access.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Results

This section presents the results and discussion on the challenges of student journalists during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 1

Challenges of the Nation Builder Journalists during the Covid-19 pandemic

Challenges	f	%
Health-related issues	**18**	30
Adaptability-related issues	**15**	25
Connectivity-related issues	**11**	18.33
Journalism-related issues	9	15
Financial-related issues	5	8.33
ICT-related issues	2	3.33
Total	60	100

To analyze the challenges faced by the student journalists during the Covid-19 pandemic, the collected responses from Google Forms were collated on a table. Similar and related answers were identified and gathered in one column and came up with a theme. The number of similar responses or challenges that belong to one theme was counted. The result is summarized utilizing the table below. The researchers extracted sample answers from the respondents in each revealed theme and used them to enrich the discussion and interpretation of data. The related studies and literature were used to support the data gathered.

The themes were determined based on the issues related to health, adaptability, connectivity, journalism, finance, and information, communication, and technology.

Table 1 presents the challenges of the campus press at the height of the coronavirus disease global health crisis which highlighted health-related (30%), adaptability-related (25%), and connectivity-related issues (18.33%).

4.2. Discussion

As mentioned in the results, the challenges faced by student journalists include adaptability-related issues, connectivity-related issues, and journalism-related issues.

4.2.1. Health-related issues

As the challenges and strategies of college students were determined in the Philippines' technology-mediated learning, they found out that the global health crisis has affected students' mental health (Barrot, Llenares, & del Rosario, 2021). They further revealed that the Covid-19 pandemic had the greatest impact on the quality of the learning experience and students' mental health. This study then supports their findings.

Extract 1: "Easily stressed and pressured due to school work as well". (SJ19)

Extract 2: "Time Management, Mental Health, and Working Environment". (SJ3)

Extract 3: "Combined stresses from different areas in our life (all types of stress in one setting". (SJ17)

For health-related issues, there are two classifications such as mental and personal-related issues. The pandemic has affected the mental health of people. In this research, student journalists shared that this pandemic causes them stress. "*Easily stressed and pressured due to school work* (sic) *as well,*" SJ19 expressed. Similarly, SJ3 enumerated the challenge he experienced as a student

journalist during this time of the pandemic. Also, SJ17 experienced the same concern. There remains much to be learned about the psychological impacts facing students and what could be done to reduce their negative effects. They recommended giving priority to studies on the student's mental health to reduce adverse academic and psychosocial outcomes and mitigate the damaging outcome of the global health dilemma. Many tertiary-level institutions including the guidance offices of the university where the participants of the present study were enrolled in organized webinars via Facebook Live and Zoom to reach out to the students and help them cope with their distress and health-related issues brought on by the pandemic.

Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic has also affected the psychological and social being of student journalists. They have a hard time adjusting from face-to-face communication set-up to technology/computer-mediated interactions in the present.

Extract 4: "I can't meet my seniors and other new student journalists like me, it makes me feel a bit distant from them". (SJ7)

Student Journalist No. 7 (SJ7) said that they could not meet their seniors. Human beings are social creatures. The presence of school belonging has powerful long- and short-term implications for students' positive psychological and academic outcomes (Allen, Gray, Baumeister, & Leary, 2021). Likewise, some student journalists also feel lonely and unmotivated to perform their tasks as campus press due to limitations brought about by the pandemic. Due to the quarantine, school, and work closure could lead to loneliness, confusion, anger, frustration, boredom, and the constant feeling of inadequate information (Khoo & Lantos, 2020).

In the international study of Sumalinog (2022), attitudinal barriers to online learning were revealed. It includes delays in doing the course's tasks, poor time management, and feeling apathetic. It is also affirmed by research on virtual learning at the height of the Covid-19 crisis the negative effects on procrastinators' academic performance including their desire to study and online engagement because of their lack of self-regulation (Melgaard, Monir, Lasrado, & Fagerstrøm, 2022). Their proposed displacement hypothesis suggests that using technology-mediated communication would hamper well-being and intensify perceived loneliness since it displaces valuable direct interpersonal communication time that could be spent with existing social interactions. Meanwhile, using the internet and social media has negative effects on well-being and has increased the level of loneliness. These findings support the result of this study (Hall, Kearney, & Xing, 2018).

Extract 5: "During the pandemic, I lost my enthusiasm to write and pursue my studies. The competitiveness I had seems lost in this school year". (SJ9)

Extract 6: "Slow learner, and Lack of Confidence". (SJ13)

Also, SJ13 shared that aside from an internet connection, the pandemic lowered her confidence level. Meanwhile, personal-related issues were also revealed in this study. Student journalists have experienced personal or family problems during the pandemic that prevent them from performing their tasks as campus press.

Extract 7: "Time, Internet connection, and Family Problem". (SJ21)

The health-related issues in this study consist of mental and personal challenges. The pandemic has affected the mental health of SJ3, SJ17, and SJ19 and has caused them stress. Meanwhile, SJ7's social being has been disturbed, and felt distant from his co-student journalists. Finally, SJ 9 and 13 feel lonely and unmotivated while SJ21 considers family problems as a challenge.

4.2.2. Adaptability-related issues

Journalists' attempt to be proactive and innovative appears to be a way of coping with this lack of consistent and clear information. However, their flexibility and innovation are overshadowed by the limited resources journalists have during the pre-pandemic. Perhaps the pandemic conditions only confirm that these hurdles are true. Due to the lockdown where students aged below 21 could not go out of their residences during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the student journalists were also confined at home. In this regard, the communication with their fellow staff of student publication and senior officers was affected. Other members lack the motivation to write and cover events due to the new way of gathering information which included only the Facebook live events, recordings, online interviews, memoranda, programs, etc. Hence, the first-hand experience was limited due to IATF restrictions in not allowing students to go inside the campus vicinity for health reasons.

Here are the extracts on Adaptability-related Issues:

Extract 8: "Events' coverage, data/information dissemination, and communication with other writers and editors seem a little difficult in this new normal". (SJ2)

Extract 9: "I can't meet my seniors and other new student journalists like me, it makes me feel a bit distant from them". (SJ7)

Both Extracts 8 and 9 exemplify adaptability-related issues. These include the ability to cover events on campus, communicate with the editors and fellow student journalists, and disseminate information during the lockdown and absence of physical events. The result of this study is also affirmed in the anchored theory, Diffusion and Innovation, which explains the behavior of people towards a new idea in technology, the process of adaptation to it, and how innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members. New ideas and innovations frighten people and cause frustration. This is due to the fear that new ideas may fail. This is similar to the case of people who are changing their teaching-learning process from the traditional face-to-face to a technologically mediated education.

Concerning this study, some student journalists can be classified as laggards (i.e., people who lag behind the general population in adopting innovative products and new ideas.) This is primarily because they are risk-averse and set in their ways of doing things. Eventually, the sweep of innovation through mainstream society makes it impossible for them to conduct their daily life (and work) without it. As a result, they are forced to begin using it but some factors may be considered as why the student journalists are classified as laggards, one of which is the connectivity issues which are also closely related to their socio-economic status.

The adaptability-related issues of the student press are inevitable and a valid concern due to the pandemic. As the Disaster Communicative Ecology Model assumes, communication resources used in a disaster and crisis may be different from those used outside of the disaster or crisis context. Covid-19 is considered a disaster. Since there are changes in communication resources of the students to their teachers and co-journalists, there is a high chance of having adaptability-related challenges. Higher education students are required to adapt to an abrupt transition to synchronous online learning due to the global Covid-19 pandemic (Besser, Flett, & Zeigler-Hill, 2020).

4.2.3. Connectivity-related issues

Accessibility is considered the most essential challenge students face in a complete online learning situation. In a similar vein, the students' understudy's geographical location could be a

factor in terms of the availability of a strong internet connection. To contextualize, there has always been an issue with internet connectivity in the Philippines in general and Cebu in particular. Students who attended classes pre-pandemic went back to their provinces during the lockdown and the connection in their specific locations was not as strong as when they were residing in Cebu City. Students were not yet equipped and ready for a complete online experience. Poor internet connection is one of the major challenges experienced by student journalists.

Extract 10: "Poor internet connection, schedule, responsibilities at home". (SJ4)

Extract 11: "Communication (since some of our colleagues have a poor internet connection)". (SJ17)

Students in Cebu experienced technological barriers, such as a lack of good internet connectivity, a lack of devices, and a lack of technical skills in manipulating online platforms. Most of the student journalists live in rural areas and they are most likely experiencing internet access problems. Besser et al. (2020) affirmed the result of this current research when they mentioned that students experience technical difficulties such as poor internet connectivity and a lack of learning devices, especially in rural areas.

Concerning Knowledge Gap Theory, the mass media information in a society increases, those with higher socio-economic status acquires this information faster than low socioeconomic status ones. Since most of the students belong to low socioeconomic status, they cannot easily adapt to the new means of communication in this time of pandemic which is very dependent on internet connection. Not all student journalists are privileged enough to have WIFI at home and some of them are just using mobile data to attend their classes. Buying loads for data connection is very costly for them. In effect, they cannot acquire the information fast and they cannot perform their roles as journalists effectively due to a lack of internet connection which is very vital in online communication. This finding concurred with another study that there is a digital knowledge gap among the Chinese public during Covid-19. In this study, the student journalists have limited access to digital media due to their socio-economic status and this limits them to perform their tasks as campus press (Wang, Li, Wu, & Gao, 2021).

4.2.4. Journalism-related issues

During the Covid-19 pandemic, journalists have the challenging task of gathering and distributing accurate information. Interviewing people face-to-face might be difficult, but using online video conferencing software might mitigate the challenge posed by pandemic restrictions. Video interviews were usually done via Zoom instead of sending out teams or getting interviewees in a studio face-to-face (Coman, Țîru, Meseșan-Schmitz, Stanciu, & Bularca, 2020). In addition, it became more difficult for journalists to access their sources, as the freedom of movement and the ability to meet face-to-face was strictly prohibited. This is also the same challenge encountered by student journalists in covering events online.

These are the following extracts on journalism-related issues:

Extract 12: "Events' coverage, data/information dissemination, and communication with other writers and editors seem a little difficult in this new normal". (SJ2)

Extract 13: "Misinformation from interviewees". (SJ8)

Extract 14: "I can say that the increase in screen time is considered a challenge of being a student journalist in the new normal". (SJ1)

The journalism-related issues faced by student journalists are just very valid concerns based on the concept of the Disaster Communicative Ecology Model, which emphasizes that during crises like the Covid-19 pandemic, it is normal that there are changes in resources and information that are different from the resources and information before the pandemic. One way to overcome these journalism-related concerns is that student journalists must adapt to the new normal way of gathering and reporting the news. In covering events about Covid-19, an important degree of science literacy and critical awareness of political and socio-economic systems could be the key to strengthening the role of journalism as a curator or verifier of information (Quandt & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2021).

4.2.5. Financial-related issues

Five students who participated in the present study mentioned that they had a financial crisis during this pandemic. This implies that they were affected by the loss of their parent's jobs. Getting an internet load despite the presence of a free Wifi kit supplied by the university was not sufficient for them to sustain in online learning and campus journalism. The data suggest that these student journalists need financial support from the university so that they can work on campus journalism tasks. This serves as a point of reflection in the academe on how it can provide financial assistance to the students. With the socioeconomic status of student journalists, financial-related issues are not new. The Internet cost and inaccessibility are the major burdens for students. This is affirmed by the result of this study (Balatayo et al., 2021).

Extract 15: "Financial needs for net" (SJ14)

Extract 16: "Financial crisis" (SJ12)

As assumed by Knowledge Gap Theory, those with higher socioeconomic status acquire the information faster than low socioeconomic status ones. For the financial issue, both SJ14 and SJ12 lack the finances in getting bandwidth or data for their communication for studies and campus journalism in Extract 15 and Extract 16, respectively.

4.2.6. ICT-related issues

As observed in the local context, most of the students in the university used only smartphones. Only a few of them used laptops for online classes. These could be the factors why they lagged in accomplishing assigned tasks whether in classes or campus journalism. The channels of communication indicated in their profile were Facebook Messenger, e-mail, and text messaging. However, Facebook Messenger is usually to easily communicate since it does not require much data and internet connectivity. Here are the extracts:

Extract 17: "I can say that the increase in screen time is considered a challenge of being a student journalist in the new normal". (SJ1)

Extract 18: "... Second is communication. Not all of the student journalist (sic) has the devices and technology to communicate, so it's very challenging every time we have a meeting". (SJ16)

Concerning the ICT-related issues, SJ1 and SJ16 found the increasing screen time and the lack of devices in communicating with their fellow journalists as shown in both Extracts 12 and 13. Technological barriers such as poor internet connection, absence of gadgets, and poor technical knowledge in using online platforms are experienced by college students in Cebu. Several students do not have stable internet access due either to cost or actual physical location (Estella, 2020). In this challenge, it can be inferred that the socio-economic status of the student journalists, as

assumed by Knowledge Gap Theory, is one of the reasons why the student journalists acquire the information slowly since they do not have the resources to access this information (Qi, An, Zhang, & Wang, 2020).

Since most of the student journalists are from the lower income class, consequently most of them do not have gadgets to use in their online classes or in performing their journalistic duties. Knowledge gaps will arise when an organization's knowledge reserves fail to meet the needs of innovation activities such as integrating the knowledge and technology resources (Qi et al., 2020). The lack of technology resources of the Nation Builder organization limits the performance of its editorial staff (Ilgaz, 2021). Due to the absence of these gadgets, some students do not know how to use their features. These situations can also be supported by the assumption of diffusion of innovation theory which states that there are late adopters of innovation which is the new normal. One of the reasons why they do not adapt to innovation is that they do not have resources. Some students drive and sit in parking lots to get WIFI (Lynch, Dominelli, & Cuadra, 2022).

Several students had difficulty complying with the learning activities and requirements due to limited or no internet connectivity (Dayagbil, Palompon, Garcia, & Olvido, 2021). Finally, several challenges threaten the quality of technical training among Filipino students in the Philippines. These include low technological knowledge (Tomaro, 2018). To synthesize, the predominant challenges of student journalists include health-related, adaptability-related, and connectivity-related issues.

These are the training program initiatives that can be made: (i) Training programs can include: a. Mental Health and Adaptability of Student Journalists which could be facilitated by the Guidance Day and Evening counselors of the university inclusive of all participants from the student journalists across campuses. (ii) Photojournalism techniques during the pandemic through organizing digital photo exhibits which could be posted on the **CTU Premier Facebook** page, the official Facebook page of the **Cebu Technological University** for wider dissemination. (iii) ICT in Media and Communication which could be a workshop among student journalists across campuses with resource speakers from the College of Computer, Information and Communication Technology or outside **CTU.**

4.3. Training program initiatives

These are the training program initiatives that can be proposed based on the discovered challenges. A Series of webinars to capacitate the student journalists and student leaders could also be organized to cover events of the universities and align the event with the university strategic plans for 2022 - 2024 where newsworthy university events shall be documented. (v) Student journalists could also contribute to the web presence by submitting their write-ups for publication on the university website and social media platforms. (vi) Media and Information Literacy could also be one of the topics in capacity-building activities to fact-check information. (vii) The student journalists could be given a monthly allowance intended for their communication and internet connectivity costs. (viii) Student journalists could also be given recognition every month, quarter, or year for their exemplary contribution to campus journalism. (ix) Virtual press conferences or Face-to-face press conferences might be organized annually.

5. Conclusion

The student journalists coming from a state university in the Philippines are no exception in dealing with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. This study identified five challenges that were experienced in varying degrees namely: health-related issues, ICT-related issues,

connectivity-related issues, adaptability-related issues, and journalism-related issues. These identified challenges were the hindrances to student writers' productivity in writing newsworthy articles and in dealing with their academic requirements. Moreover, the student journalists' attitudes towards writing were also affected by the pandemic that caused the identified challenges as the transition from face-to-face campus journalism activities was changed radically to the online mode. Thus, there are action plans that need to be implemented to sustain the interest of student journalists to write newsworthy articles.

This study provides implications for campus journalism specifically on the flexibility and capability of student journalists in dealing with the pandemic. Since they are the official student press of the campus, they function as the voice of the voiceless students especially in the new normal educational set-up. However, this study only focused on the challenges of the student journalists and did not include their coping mechanisms during the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, it only focused on the student journalists of a single campus of the state university.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest in this paper.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

References

Aboagye, E. A., Yawson, J. A., & Appiah, K. N. (2020). Covid-19 and e-learning: The challenges of students in Tertiary Institutions. *Social Education Research, 2*(1), 109-115. doi:10.37256/ser.122020422

Allen, K.-A., Gray, D. L., Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (2021). The need to belong: A deep dive into the origins, implications, and future of a foundational construct. *Educational Psychology Review, 34*(2), 1133-1156. doi:10.1007/s10648-021-09633-6

Balatayo, S., Almeria, T., Alborote, S., Nobleza, J., Ebora, M., & Oducado, R. (2021). *Barriers towards online learning among graduate students in nursing in a Philippine higher education institution during the global Covid-19 outbreak.* Paper presented at the International Conference on Health Science, Banjarmasin, Indonesia.

Barrot, J. S., Llenares, I. I., & del Rosario, L. S. (2021). Students' online learning challenges during the pandemic and how they cope with them: The case of the Philippines. *Education and Information Technologies, 26*, 7321-7338. doi:10.1007/s10639-021-10589-x

Bernadas, J. M. A. C., & Ilagan, K. (2020). Journalism, public health, and Covid-19: Some preliminary insights from the Philippines. *Media International Australia, 177*(1), 132-138, doi:10.1177/1329878x20953854

Besser, A., Flett, G. L., & Zeigler-Hill, V. (2020). Adaptability to a sudden transition to online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic: Understanding the challenges for students. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology, 8*(2), 85-105. doi:10.1037/stl0000198

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Coman, C., Țîru, L. G., Meseşan-Schmitz, L., Stanciu, C., & Bularca, M. C. (2020). Online teaching and learning in higher education during the Coronavirus pandemic: Students' perspective. *Sustainability, 12*(24), 1-24. doi:10.3390/su122410367

Dayagbil, F. T., Palompon, D. R., Garcia, L. L., & Olvido, M. M. J. (2021). Teaching and learning continuity amid and beyond the pandemic. *Frontiers in Education, 6*, 1-12. doi:10.3389/feduc.2021.678692

Estella, P. G. (2020). Journalism competence and the Covid-19 crisis in Southeast Asia. *Pacific Journalism Review: Te Koakoa, 26*(2), 15-34. doi:10.24135/pjr.v26i2.1132

Greyson, D. (2018). Information triangulation: A complex and agentic everyday information practice. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology, 69*(7), 869-878. doi:10.1002/asi.24012

Grubic, N., Badovinac, S., & Johri, A. M. (2020). Student mental health in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic: A call for further research and immediate solutions. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 66*(5), 517-518. doi:10.1177/0020764020925108

Hall, J. A., Kearney, M. W., & Xing, C. (2018). Two tests of social displacement through social media use. *Information, Communication & Society, 22*(10), 1396-1413. doi:10.1080/1369118x.2018.1430162

Halton, C. (2022). *Diffusion of innovations theory*. Retrieved July 29, 2022, from https://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/diffusion-of-innovations-theory.asp

Ilgaz, H. (2021). The role of mobile technologies in shifting to digital. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 69*(1), 189-190. doi:10.1007/s11423-021-09945-y

Jaca, C. A. L. (2022). State university students' learning locations and remote learning challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 21*(2), 176-194. doi:10.26803/ijlter.21.2.11

Khoo, E., & Lantos, J. (2020). Lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic. *Acta Paediatrica, 109*(7), 1323-1325. doi:10.1111/apa.15307

Liu, W., Xu, W., & John, B. (2021). Organizational disaster communication ecology: Examining interagency coordination on social media during the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. *American Behavioral Scientist, 65*(7), 914-933. doi:10.1177/0002764221992823

Lynch, M. W., Dominelli, L., & Cuadra, C. (2022). Information communication technology during Covid-19. *Social Work Education, 42*(1), 1-13. doi:10.1080/02615479.2022.2040977

Melgaard, J., Monir, R., Lasrado, L. A., & Fagerstrøm, A. (2022). Academic procrastination and online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Procedia Computer Science, 196*, 117-124. doi:10.1016/j.procs.2021.11.080

Pavlik, J. V. (2013). Innovation and the future of journalism. *Digital Journalism, 1*(2), 181-193. doi:10.1080/21670811.2012.756666

Perreault, M. F., & Perreault, G. P. (2021). Journalists on Covid-19 journalism: Communication ecology of pandemic reporting. *American Behavioral Scientist, 65*(7), 976-991. doi:10.1177/0002764221992813

Posetti, J., Bell, E., & Brown, P. (2022). *Journalism and the pandemic: A global snapshot of the impacts*. Retrieved November 02, 2022, from https://www.icfj.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Journalism%20and%20the%20Pandemic%20Project%20Report%201%202020_FINAL.pdf

Qi, L., An, X., Zhang, S., & Wang, X. (2020). Research on knowledge gap identification method in innovative organizations under the "Internet+" Environment. *Information, 11*(12), 1-14, doi:10.3390/info11120572

Quandt, T., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2021). The Coronavirus pandemic as a critical moment for digital journalism. *Digital Journalism, 9*(9), 1199-1207. doi:10.1080/21670811.2021.1996253

Robert, C., & Augustine, M. (2019). Understanding the concept of knowledge gap and knowledge expansion: A theoretical perspective. *Research Journali's Journal of Management, 7*(3), 1-13.

Skar, G. B. U., Graham, S., & Huebner, A. (2021). Learning loss during the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of emergency remote instruction on first grade students' writing: A natural experiment. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *114*(7), 1553-1566. doi:10.1037/edu0000701

Spialek, M. L., Czlapinski, H. M., & Houston, J. B. (2016). Disaster communication ecology and community resilience perceptions following the 2013 central Illinois tornadoes. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, 17,* 154-160. doi:10.1016/j.ijdrr.2016.04.006

Sumalinog, G. G. (2022). Barriers of online education in the new normal: Teachers' perspectives. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 21*(1), 33-50.

Tomaro, P. (2018). ICT integration in the educational system of Philippines. *Journal of Governance and Public Policy, 5*(3), 259-282. doi:10.18196/jgpp.5399

Wang, H., Li, L., Wu, J., & Gao, H. (2021). Factors influencing Covid-19 knowledge-gap: A cross-sectional study in China. *BMC Public Health, 21*(1), 1-11. doi:10.1186/s12889-021-11856-9