Self-Efficacy and Learning Experiences of Preservice Teachers in a State University

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Abstract

The preservice teachers' student teaching program serves as a culmination activity for future educators in the Philippines. The quality of their training could affect the quality of the learners in the country. This study investigated the self-efficacy level and the learning experiences of 251 preservice teachers during the post-pandemic. The study employed a mixed method, specifically a sequential explanatory research design. A researcher-made semi-structured interview questions and one (1) adapted questionnaire were employed in the study. Mean and standard deviation were utilized for the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was employed for the qualitative data. Results revealed that preservice teacher's self-efficacy was high in both gender and all academic programs. Furthermore, three (3) themes emerged as preservice teachers' learning experiences, including utilizing pedagogical strategies and practices, hurdles and difficulties encountered, and managing obstacles. Results imply the need to strengthen, revise, and create policies on student teaching in State Universities and Colleges (SUC) in the country emphasizing flexible learning. Capacitating preservice teachers and improving their instructional capacity to adjust to any learning setup are also deemed essential.

Keywords: self confidence, student teaching, post-pandemic, motivation

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the global educational system (Pacheco, 2020). It has compelled many universities to immediately switch to the online delivery of lessons (Hew et al., 2020). Implementing the student teaching program is one of the most significantly affected areas in the Philippine higher education system. Based on the Joint CHED-DEPED Memorandum Order on the Policies and Guidelines on the Deployment of Preservice Teachers for Field Study and Teaching Internship, teacher education institutions (TEIs) must respond positively to the distinctive challenge and opportunity presented by the unusual circumstances surrounding AY 2020 – 2021 by delivering courses in innovative and flexible ways suitable to the context of educational institutions, teachers, and students. Likewise, the Commission on Higher Education released the Guidelines on the Implementation of Flexible Learning (CHED Memorandum Order No. 04, s, 2020) to ensure continuity of learning at the tertiary level while DepEd issued an order on the Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for School Year 2020-2021 considering the Covid-19 Public Health Emergency (DepEd Order No. 12, series of 2020).

Consequently, school districts across the country took different approaches to return to school for the 2020–2021 school year, with some districts returning with face-to-face instruction with socially distanced students while others returned with hybrid teaching (alternating face-to-face and virtual instruction) and 100% virtual instruction. Regardless of the instructional approach, teachers returned to the classroom facing drastically different environments, routines, and instructional approaches. These requirements included mandates from districts to learn new virtual instruction pedagogy and platforms and provide instruction to all students, no matter the instructional approach.

In the College of Education (CoEd) of the Visayas State University, the pandemic has brought critical issues in implementing the student teaching program. These challenges have significantly impacted the cooperating teachers, student teaching supervisors, and student teachers. Student teachers were still tasked with their practicum in the "New Normal," which is done in a virtual environment or through a face-to-face setup. In their practicum, preservice teachers are expected to demonstrate confidence and self-efficacy because it influences their behavior (MA &

Canagh, 2018), classroom management, and student engagement (Scarparolo & Subban, 2021).

Self-efficacy is the "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). It is a self-assessment of one's ability to deal with a task (Taipjutorus et al., 2012; Yokoyama, 2019). Self-efficacy helps students adapt and cope with the new learning environment (Alivernini & Lucidi, 2011) and is influenced by gender, age, and domain (Yokoyama, 2019). It is an essential factor affecting motivation and learning (Dinther et al., 2010). People with high confidence in their capabilities are considered to have a strong sense of efficacy, where complex tasks serve as opportunities to hone their skills (Alqurashi, 2016). In higher education, it is essential to determine the teacher's level of self-efficacy because it influences teachers' performance (Cocca et al., 2018). Gordon et al. (2022) highlight that pre and in-service teacher's teacher self-efficacy (TSE) plays an essential role in the successful implementation of educational reforms because high TSE indicates a teacher's readiness to support, carry out, commence positive change, persevere with difficulties, and be open to new ideas (Cerit, 2019; Charalambous & Philippou, 2010) to be able to achieve certain specific teaching goals (MA & Cavanaugh, 2018).

Aside from self-efficacy, one of the areas that need delving into is the student teaching-learning experiences. Learning experiences are a learner's personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement, both in and outside of schools (Cornell & Drew, 2024). In the preservice practicum, it is the learnings they earned rather than through representations constructed by others. It may also refer to knowledge gained from direct face-to-face interaction rather than through a technological medium. Most studies on Teacher self-efficacy (TSE) are quantitative (Klassen et al., 2011; as cited by MA & Cavanagh, 2018), so the need for qualitative support seems essential (MA & Cavanagh, 2018). That is why delving into preservice teachers' learning experiences is essential.

To satisfy the knowledge gap in preservice self-efficacy and learning experience, this study attempted to investigate student teachers' self-efficacy and learning experiences during the post-pandemic in the College of Education, Visayas State University, Baybay City, Leyte. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the socio-demographic profile of the student teachers when grouped according to:
   a. Sex
   b. Academic Program
2. What is the level of student teacher’s self-efficacy based on the Teacher Efficacy Scale?
   a. Sex
   b. Academic Program
3. What are the preservice teachers' learning experiences with their student teaching during the post-pandemic?

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-method research study, specifically a sequential explanatory design. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), this mixed method consists of collecting quantitative data and then collecting qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results. This research used the Teacher Efficacy Scale questionnaire to gather the quantitative data. A semi-structured interview was administered to dig deeper into the student teaching self-efficacy during their practicum.

2.2 Research Participants

The student teachers currently enrolled for the second semester of SY 2021 - 2022 at the College of Education, Visayas State University, were the respondents of this study. Complete enumeration was employed in the study.

2.3 Research Locale

This study was conducted at the Department of Teacher Education, Visayas State University, Baybay City, Leyte, in the eastern part of the Visayas Region in Central Philippines. The researcher secured a permission letter from the Dean before the conduct of the study.

2.4 Research Instruments

The following were the different research instruments used in the conduct of the study:

Teacher Self Efficacy Scale.

This questionnaire was designed to help researchers better understand the things that create difficulties for student teachers in their practicum. This is an adapted questionnaire from Nie et al. (2010). This instrument contains 12 statements from the constructs: Efficacy for Instruction, Efficacy for Motivation, and Efficacy for Classroom Management. This instrument is on a 5-point Likert scale. The authors permitted the researchers to utilize the said instrument.

Table 1. Description of the Different Levels of Preservice Teachers' Self-Efficacy

Mean Score	Description
4.51-5.0	Very High
3.51-4.50	High
2.51-3.50	Moderate
1.51-2.50	Low
1.00-1.50	Very Low

Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire.

This was used to investigate the learning experiences of the preservice teachers. Five (5) guide questions were prepared and aligned with the Teacher Efficacy Instrument.

The pilot testing was administered to dry run the said instrument. It was carried out to see some concerns from the pilot-tested students and, of course, to improve the administration of the final research.

2.5 Research Procedures

The researchers sought the approval and endorsement of OVPREI to conduct this study with preservice teachers. After securing the approval and endorsement, the researchers secured voluntary participation from the respondents, specifying their willingness to be a part of the research. The survey questionnaire was executed first, followed by the written interview. Students involved were instructed to respond honestly based on their feelings.

2.6 Data Analysis

All data gathered was analyzed using SPSS 21. Mean and standard deviation were utilized to determine preservice teachers' self-efficacy level. In addition, the responses from the semi-structured written interviews were summarized, coded, and used for emerging similarities or differences using thematic data analysis by Braun and Clarke (2012).

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Before the study was conducted, participants were informed that the research was voluntary and that all data gathered would be utilized for research purposes only and in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Those who indicated their willingness participated in the administered survey.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Preservice Teacher's Demographic Profile and Self-Efficacy Levels in terms of Gender, Academic Program, and Self-Efficacy Statements

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of preservice teachers when grouped according to sex. The data shows that most future teachers are females, comprising almost 65% of the senior student population in the College of Education. Many pre-service teachers, who comprise 22% of the sample, preferred not to tell their gender.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Preservice Teachers when Grouped According to Sex

Gender	Count	Percent	Cumulative Count	Cumulative Percent
Female	163	64.94	163	64.94
Male	32	12.75	195	77.69
Prefer not to say	56	22.31	251	100.00
Total	251	100.00	251	100.00

The data shows that females are more likely to choose the teaching profession. This could be because of their inherent role in teaching and molding their children when they start a family. It is also a fact that there are more females than males in the Philippine population. These results support studies emphasizing the rising percentage of women in the teaching profession (Bongco & Ancho, 2020; Ramos et al., 2020; Wood, 2012), as teaching is believed to be a female task (Lee & Lee, 2016). Moreover, this current setting of having more female teachers is preferable since, according to Haase (2008), employing more male teachers may not be in the best interests of gender justice unless they are informed by a sophisticated understanding of gender and social power. Most males think of a "Mothering role" as something that a lot of female teachers do in the teaching profession.

Table 2 provides the demographic profile of the preservice teachers when grouped according to academic Program. The College of Education offers seven (7) academic programs; 25% percent are future elementary teachers, and 75% are future high school teachers. Among the secondary education students, BCAEd (Bachelor or Culture and Arts Education) got the fewest preservice teachers at 6.37%, and Filipino majors had the most number, which is 14.34%. There are more Filipino and Social Studies pre-service teachers at the secondary level because they have successfully endured the 4-year training and course works than their counterparts.

Table 3. Demographic Profile of Preservice Teachers when Grouped According to Academic Program

Academic Program	Count	Percent	Cumulative Count	Cumulative Percent
BCAED (Culture and Arts Ed)	16	6.37	16	6.37
BEED-GE (Elementary – Gen Ed)	64	25.50	80	31.87
BPED (Physical Ed)	32	12.75	112	44.62
BSED English	24	9.56	136	54.18
BSED Filipino	36	14.34	172	68.53
BSED Math	23	9.16	195	77.69
BSED Science	23	9.16	218	86.85
BSED Soc Stud	33	13.15	251	100.00
Total	251	100.00	251	100.00

The data indicates that the college of education produces more elementary education graduates. This is consistent with the study of Bongco and Ancho (2020), which indicates that teaching is feminized work, especially at the elementary level. This is aligned with the current setup in the country, where most of the barangays have elementary schools, hence, there is a greater chance for these graduates to be employed when they graduate. Furthermore, this current setup and percentage distribution of the university pre-service teachers already supports the needs of the neighboring towns for teachers in the elementary and secondary levels. Possible reasons for choosing this education program could be that the profession will give them a chance for professional development, enabling them to use all their abilities (Javornik Krečič & Ivanuš Grmek, 2005).

Table 4 presents the self-efficacy beliefs of the preservice teachers per statement. Data shows that in all self-efficacy statements and subscales, including efficacy for instruction, motivation, and classroom management, all preservice teachers got a high level of self-efficacy with means of 3.99, 4.10, and 4.02, respectively. Moreover, the total self-efficacy statements are also high, with $M = 4.04$ and $SD = 0.483$.

Despite the post-pandemic, the high level of preservice self-efficacy during student teaching is high. This outcome is highly acceptable since it also reflects the adequate training provided to them by the College of Education. Preservice teachers performed well during their student teaching days, which means that their experience was positive because of the successful preparation they experienced.

Table 4. Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Preservice Teachers During Pandemic

Self-Efficacy Statements	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Description
1. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	251	3	5	3.96	.585	High
2. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	251	1	5	3.87	.695	High
3. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	251	2	5	3.96	.694	High
4. How well can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	251	3	5	4.17	.668	High
Efficacy for instruction	251	2.50	5.00	3.99	.512	High
5. How well can you help your students value learning?	251	2	5	4.33	.667	High
6. How well can you motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?	251	2	5	4.22	.724	High
7. How well can you improve the academic performance of a failing student?	251	2	5	4.00	.713	High
8. How well can you handle the most difficult students?	251	1	5	3.85	.765	High
Efficacy for motivation	251	2.25	5.00	4.10	.556	High
9. How well can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	251	2	5	4.00	.718	High
10. How well can you get students to follow classroom rules?	251	2	5	4.20	.714	High
11. How well can you manage disruptive behavior in the classroom?	251	2	5	4.01	.740	High
12. How well can you keep a few problem students from mining an entire lesson?	251	2	5	3.89	.678	High
Efficacy for classroom management	251	2.25	5.00	4.02	.572	High
Preservice Self-Efficacy	251	2.50	5.00	4.04	.483	High

Table 5 shows the self-efficacy beliefs pre-service teachers by sex. Results show that both sexes have a high level of self-efficacy, indicating that both males and females are taught with commitment to their students. Overall, the M = 4.038, SD = 0.483 indicates a high level of self-efficacy.

Table 5. Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Preservice Teachers during the Pandemic When Grouped According to Sex

Sex	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Description
F	163	2.583	5.000	4.052	.470	High
M	32	2.500	5.000	4.096	.572	High
Prefer not to say	56	2.833	4.917	3.964	.465	High
Total	251	2.500	5.000	4.038	.483	High

This high level of self-efficacy in both sexes indicates that all the preservice teachers are committed to becoming professional teachers in the future. The results are also expected from these preservice teachers since they were trained and prepared for their student teaching activity.

Table 6 highlights the self-efficacy of preservice teachers in the different academic programs. Interestingly, they may teach different subject matter and year levels, but all their self-efficacy levels are high. BSEd English got the highest mean of M = 4.16, SD = 0.402, while BPEd garnered the lowest mean, M = 3.95, SD = 0.434.

Table 6. Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Preservice Teachers during Pandemic when grouped According to Academic Program

Academic Program	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Description
BCAED (Culture and Arts Ed)	16	3.083	5.000	4.094	.664	High
BEED-GE (Elementary – Gen Ed)	64	3.000	4.917	3.993	.467	High
BPED (Physical Ed)	32	2.583	4.583	3.953	.434	High
BSED English	24	3.500	5.000	4.160	.402	High
BSED Filipino	36	3.083	4.833	4.012	.480	High
BSED Math	23	3.250	4.917	4.120	.436	High
BSED Science	23	2.500	5.000	4.101	.622	High
BSED Soc Stud	33	2.833	4.750	3.962	.430	High
Total	251	2.500	5.000	4.038	.483	High

The results above indicate that students teaching different subject matter from elementary to senior high school levels show a similar level of self-efficacy. This may imply that the professors in English, Mathematics, Sciences, PE, General Education, and other fields have prepared these preservice teachers for the real world of teaching. These results are inconsistent with Woodcock (2011), who emphasizes that elementary teachers have higher TSE for student engagement than middle or high school teachers. In the study, all levels showed high self-efficacy, but BSEd English teaching in high schools had the highest mean.

Results in tables 4, 5, and 6 about self-efficacy, whether it is per self-efficacy statement, grouped according to gender or academic programs, are in accordance with the study of McConnell et.al (2021), highlighting those teachers in the early years of teaching, including those doing the preservice teaching, got higher confidence levels. Huston (2017) and Okhremtchouk et al. (2009) also found that preservice teachers are more confident in planning, instruction, and assessment than their actual abilities. In Weber and Greiner's (2019) study about inclusive education, most preservice teachers have slightly high self-efficacy beliefs. However, this is inconsistent with the study of MA and Cavanagh (2018), who presented a relatively lower level of Teacher self-efficacy, with classroom management being the most significant concern.

3.2 Preservice Teacher's Learning Experiences During the Post-Pandemic

Data from the interviews revealed three major themes: *Utilizing pedagogical strategies and practices, Hurdles and difficulties encountered, and Managing obstacles.* The first theme discusses the pre-service teachers' strategies for instruction. These strategies were also taught to them by the College; thus, they are expected to perform those in their classes. The second theme shares their difficulties in the teaching-learning process. They enumerated different experiences. However, they were able to cope, as mentioned in Theme 3. These themes were connected to capture the full meaning of the phenomenon.

Theme 1: Utilizing Pedagogical Strategies and Practices

Utilizing various pedagogical strategies and practices during practice teaching improves the student's learning experience and supports the interns' professional growth and development. The practice teachers used instructional/motivational and behavioral management strategies to achieve the targeted learning outcomes. The participants revealed that they provided manipulatives, videos, and motivational stories and used gamification and contextualized lessons. Moreover, they established rules and routines, used reinforcement, and sought advice from experienced teachers to deliver content engagingly.

This theme is best described by *Sheena's* statement:

> *To capture my students' attention, I used manipulatives such as realias/concrete objects. In like manner, I also found out that videos and motivational stories were effective in arousing and sustaining the students' interest.*

Shara likewise mentioned:

> *Employing gamification in my lessons made my class activities highly engaging. As a result, I observed maximum participation among my students.*

Moreover, Philip also stressed the benefits of contextualizing the lesson:

Based on my experience, contextualizing the lesson made it more meaningful and exciting to students. Consequently, this makes the class livelier and achieves learning outcomes.

The results conform to that of Abunda (2020), where the preservice teachers got an average level of Technological knowledge. The use of manipulatives and videos during the practicum of these preservice teachers supports the results. About learning management, same results were presented by Polyiem and Nuangchalerm (2023) indicating high level.

Table 7. Summary of Emerging Themes, Categories, and Subcategories of Preservice Teacher's Learning Experiences

Theme	Category	Subcategory
I: Utilizing pedagogical strategies and practices	Instructional/Motivational Strategies	Providing manipulatives, videos, motivational stories
		Gamification
		Contextualizing lessons
	Behavioral Management Strategies	Establishing rules and routines
		Using reinforcement
		Seeking advice from experienced teachers
II: Hurdles and Difficulties Encountered	Balancing Multiple Responsibilities	Short notice of tasks
		Planning lessons, preparing instructional materials, and performing other school-related activities
	Accessibility Issues	Lack of gadgets
		Unstable/poor Internet connectivity
III: Managing obstacles	Commitment	Work overtime
		Planning
		Finding alternative ways to cope

Theme 2: Hurdles and Difficulties Encountered

Hurdles and difficulties encountered describe the practice teachers' challenges during their internship. It includes balancing multiple responsibilities and accessibility issues. Practice teachers indicated that they had to grapple with short notice of tasks, planning lessons, preparing instructional materials, and performing other school-related activities. In addition, they also pointed out that they had limited resources in terms of gadgets and internet connectivity.

Maxine talks about hurdles and difficulties that she had to deal with.

During my practice teaching, I experienced difficulty in terms of multitasking - writing lesson plans, research, and other activities in our cooperating school in which our participation was needed.

This scenario is identical to the study of Reyes (2023), in which the participants disclosed that they find it difficult to manage their time in their practicum due to their multiple duties as students, preservice teachers, and other personal responsibilities.

Rod also expressed a related concern:

I struggled to make lesson plans and instructional materials because I did not have a laptop and a stable internet connection

This corroborates with the study of Candela and Granda (2023), which revealed some of the teachers' unexpected challenges, including poor connection and lack of student resources. This is also supported by the research findings of Trust and Whalen (2021), which revealed that most students do not have access to devices or computers, while others must share with family members. Moreover, in the study of Raymundo and Ignacio (2023), the preservice teachers who served as research participants struggled because of limited instructional materials like a lack of devices (e.g., laptops) and poor internet connection.

Further, these results are consistent with those of MA and Cavanagh (2018), who state that the lack of classroom experience is very influential in their TSE. The authors further emphasized that it is expected since they are still preservice teachers.

Theme 3: Managing Obstacles

Managing obstacles explains how the practice teachers coped with the challenges they encountered. They emphasized that commitment is crucial in overcoming obstacles. They cited that they had to engage in planning to accomplish the varied tasks. They also disclosed that they had to work overtime and looked for alternative ways to cope with the issue of the scarcity of resources. In like manner, the support system provided by the student teaching supervisors and cooperating teachers was of great help in navigating these challenges.

Ara elaborated on how she dealt with the challenges during her practicum:

> *To overcome these challenges, I focused on several key strategies. First, I prioritized effective time management by creating a structured schedule and setting specific daily goals. Second, I planned ahead to allocate appropriate time for writing lesson plans, conducting research, and participating in school activities. Third, I stayed organized, so I kept my workspace tidy and used tools like calendars and to-do lists to track my tasks. Additionally, I learned to delegate tasks where possible. For instance, with our research study, I collaborated with my group and assigned specific roles to ensure everyone contributed efficiently. This not only lightened my workload but also improved the overall quality of our work through teamwork. By combining these strategies—time management, forward planning, organization, and delegation—I was able to navigate the demands of my practice teaching more effectively and maintain a balanced approach to my responsibilities.*

Maxine likewise shared her experience about dealing with immediate tasks given:

> *My cooperating teacher sometimes assigned tasks that had to be accomplished right away. I have to work overtime to carry out the tasks. I also have to prepare in advance to craft my lesson and make my instructional materials.*

Rod elaborated on how he coped with the problem:

> *Because I did not have a laptop, I borrowed my roommate's laptop even if I needed to wait for him to finish using it.*

Izza shared a similar experience:

> *Because my laptop doesn't function well, I don't bring it to my cooperating school, and I borrow my co-practice teacher's laptop whenever it's time to go to my class. The good thing is that our classes were never in conflict, so I survived!*

Preservice teachers' high self-efficacy could be attributed to their level of commitment. Results are in accordance with the studies of Chesnut and Burley (2015) and Klassen and Chiu (2011), stating a positive correlation between preservice teachers' self-efficacy and commitment to the teaching profession.

4. Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation

This research aimed to determine the preservice teacher's self-efficacy level and learning experiences in their student teaching during the post-pandemic. Utilizing a complete enumeration, only 251 preservice teachers participated in the survey. The research utilized a sequential-explanatory research design. An adapted standardized questionnaire and a validated researcher-made semi-structured interview were employed in the study. The results showed that the preservice teachers' self-efficacy is high when grouped according to gender and academic programs. Three (3) themes emerged as their learning experiences included utilizing pedagogical strategies and practices, hurdles and difficulties encountered, and managing obstacles.

The high self-efficacy level of the preservice teachers undergoing their practicum in the post-pandemic could be attributed to the supervisors' and cooperating teachers' positive support system. From time to time, the supervisors scaffolded the preservice teachers, and the cooperating teachers supported them. Before the practicum started, the College of Education trained and equipped these preservice teachers with the necessary teaching and learning strategies to fit the setup. Furthermore, several consultations were executed with the cooperating teachers before the actual conduct of the lesson. These are apparent in qualitative results, with theme 1 highlighting the use of pedagogical strategies and practices by preservice teachers.

The preservice teachers also experienced hurdles and difficulties. These could have arisen because the novelty of the teaching-learning setup should be discussed in books. Also, nobody is expected to teach with the COVID-19 virus. However, the preservice teachers still managed these obstacles through their commitment to teaching and serving the

optimum learning of the students. The drive of these preservice teachers is praiseworthy. Their positive outlook may come from the training the College of Education has imparted them for four years.

The results suggest several recommendations for the government, the Commission on Higher Education, SUC professors, and the curriculum. For better support to the preservice teachers during abrupt changes in instruction, like the COVID-19 pandemic, the government with the SUC that the preservice teacher is affiliated with may provide facilities for better and stable internet connection. The Commission on Higher Education, with the SUC administrators, may spearhead varied training programs for the SUC professors to improve the instructional capacity of the student teachers for any learning modality. Regular enrichment programs and capability training may be established for upskilling professors to utilize instructional strategies essential to the new setup.

The curriculum must be well-aligned with the preservice teachers' needs in times of the post-pandemic or other learning disruptions like extreme heat index, calamities, and others. Learning and teaching strategies stipulated in the Student Teaching handbook must be relevant and responsive to any learning setup. Thus, a development of the preservice handbook stipulating all these matters must be developed.

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Authors contributions

All authors contributed equally to this study, from its conceptualization to the preparation of the final manuscript. Dr. L.A.M. was responsible for the quantitative analysis, while Dr. R.P.A. and Dr. M.N.M. handled the qualitative analysis. All authors have reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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