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The Resilience of a School Community During a Pandemic:
A Phenomenological Study of the Trials and Tribulations of Bishop John Paul Academy

by

Christopher Aquino

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2023

The Resilience of a School Community During a Pandemic:

The Phenomenological Study of the Trials and Tribulations of Bishop John Paul Academy

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By

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This dissertation written by Christopher Aquino, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I want to thank God for giving me the courage to apply to Loyola Marymount University's Educational Leadership for Social Justice doctoral program and faith in myself when times I doubted myself. I would like to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Rebecca Stephenson, my dissertation chair, for her guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this journey. Her expertise and invaluable insights have been instrumental in shaping my research and bringing it to completion. I am deeply grateful for her patience, understanding, and unwavering belief in my abilities.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my dissertation committee for their invaluable contributions to my research. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Fernando Estrada and Dr. Thomas Gasper for taking the time to read and offer feedback on my work. Their expertise, guidance, and support have been essential in shaping my research and bringing it to completion. I am also grateful for their patience, encouragement, and constructive criticism throughout the entire process. Their unwavering support has been instrumental in my academic growth and success.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my cohort, Cohort 17, who have been an unwavering source of support and encouragement throughout my academic journey. Your camaraderie, encouragement, and friendship have been invaluable, and I am honored to have been a part of this talented and diverse group of individuals. This dissertation would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts, constructive feedback, and motivation provided by my cohort. Your intellectual curiosity, diverse perspectives, and collaborative spirit have inspired me and pushed me to strive for excellence in my research.

To my boy band members, Adan and Adrian. Thank you for the laughter, the long hours of discussion, and the late-night writing sessions. Your unwavering support and encouragement have been a constant source of inspiration, and I am deeply grateful to have been a part of this amazing group. I am honored to share this journey with you, and I look forward to continued collaboration and friendship in the future.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the members of the Bishop John Paul Academy who graciously participated in the interviews for my research. Their insights and experiences were instrumental in shaping the direction and findings of my study. I appreciate their openness, honesty, and willingness to share their stories with me. I am also grateful for their time and effort in making this research a success. Their contributions will always hold a special place in my heart and in the results of my research.

Last but not least, I am deeply grateful to my family for their love, support, and encouragement. Their belief in me has been my greatest source of strength and motivation throughout this process. I would like to thank my parents Angel and Marilou. As immigrants from the Philippines, they showed me the meaning of hard work, selflessness, and how to love and care for their friends and family. I would like to thank my sister Luz and Mark. They showed me if I had the Mamba Mentality and the Curry mindset for success, I could achieve anything especially when times are difficult. I would like to thank my fiancé, Valerie, for her unwavering love and patience during this whole process. You have been my rock through all the ups and downs. I am also grateful to my extended family and friends for their encouragement and support.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Angel and Marilou, sister, Luz, brother-in-law, Mark, and fiancé, Valerie, who has been my source of love, support, and inspiration throughout my life. Their unwavering belief in me and my abilities has been a constant motivation and encouraged me to pursue my dreams and aspirations. I am eternally grateful for their love, encouragement, and patience, especially during the challenges and struggles of this process. This dissertation is a testament to their love and support, and I dedicate it to them with all my heart.

Finally, to the dedicated educators who navigated the challenges of remote learning and adapted to new teaching methods amidst the pandemic. Your unwavering commitment to ensuring the education and well-being of your students is an inspiration. This work is dedicated to you, with gratitude for your tireless efforts and sacrifices. Your dedication to the future generation will never be forgotten.

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ABSTRACT

The Resilience of a School Community During a Pandemic:

The Critical Narratives of the Trials and Tribulations of Bishop John Paul Academy

By

Christopher Aquino

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically impacted the world of education. Schools were forced to rapidly adapt to new modes of teaching, learning, and assessment to continue providing education to students safely and effectively. This study examines the experiences of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on their challenges, responses, and impact on students, teachers, and staff and how their promotive and protective factors contributed to their resilience.

The qualitative study includes narratives from school administrators, teachers, and students. The results showed that schools had faced numerous challenges during the pandemic, including shifting to remote learning, maintaining student engagement and motivation, addressing technological and logistical barriers, and managing the psychological impact of the pandemic on students and faculty.

Despite these challenges, schools have shown remarkable resilience and creativity in their responses to the pandemic, including implementing innovative approaches to teaching and learning and strengthening collaboration and support among teachers and staff. However, the study also highlights the impact of the pandemic on students, including lack of motivation, following local government guidelines on campus, and experiences of social isolation and stress.

This study provides valuable insights into the experiences of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of addressing the challenges and impacts of the pandemic to ensure a

safe, effective, and equitable education for all students. The study also shows how different promotive factors impact an individual's resilience. The findings can inform the development of policies and practices to support schools and students in the aftermath of the pandemic.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On March 13th, 2020, California schools closed their doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The day the principal of “Bishop John Paul Academy,” a Catholic secondary school in Southern California, announced that the school was closed until further notice, there were mixed feelings in the school community. There was some feeling of excitement since students and teachers believed it would be a short vacation. Then there were feelings of fear and uncertainty. Little did the school community know this “miniature vacation” would last a year and a half.

As the vice principal of curriculum and instruction, it was my responsibility to ensure the teachers and staff were prepared to continue instruction and learning as best as they can during the pandemic. Within an hour of the announcement, I knew there was not a lot of time to prepare the teachers for the unknown. Knowing that no one had experience teaching online, I knew that we all had to work and learn together. I created a “remote learning” team to prepare a professional development session on the following Monday. The professional development session focused on teachers’ different tools for instruction, such as Zoom (www.zoom.us). Each member of the “remote learning” team had a specific responsibility to demonstrate the tool of their choice.

After the meeting, I paired teachers with a “tech buddy” based on their familiarity with using technology while teaching. I also warned the “remote learning” team to prepare for technology challenges the next day. The day had come when students were to log on to Zoom to continue their learning. The first day had plenty of complications, internet issues, cameras being

off, so students could not be seen, “Zoom bombers” (individuals who do not go to the school and use Zoom to the disrupt classes), and several attendance issues.

As the 2019-2020 school year was nearing its end, the families had many questions. How much longer will the school continue to be online? Will the Seniors have a prom? Will there be a graduation? How will grades be managed this year? Will tuition be discounted due to remote learning? Will summer school be online as well? The administration based many of these questions on the state and county’s public health guidelines and the Southern California diocese.

After the 2019-2020 school year, the administration sent out a survey to all stakeholders (teachers, students, and parents) discussing the remote learning experience. In addition, there was a change in leadership as the principal resigned and the principal reorganized the administration. The new administration reviewed the data during the summer to address the concerns and implement new policies. For example, there was a need for improvement in communication with the teachers, workload, dress code, and events to involve students virtually. It quickly became apparent that the administration would also need a longer-term strategy.

The long-term strategy was to continue the school’s mission of pursuing excellence and changing the world. The strategy encompasses improvements in the school’s curriculum, providing programs for invention and students with Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plans, increasing opportunities for dual enrollment credits, and resources for support in students’ physical, spiritual, and mental health. In addition, the school will be adjusting the curriculum into a more culturally responsive education one department at a time. Students need to see both sides and listen to everyone’s story. The best instruction occurs when students and teachers actively listen to and learn from each other.

The school continued to use an intervention program for students with Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plans and was behind in the state's benchmarks. These intervention programs focused on mathematics and English language arts. Every year, 60% of the freshmen class entered below the 15th percentile based on their high school placement test. The school wanted to ensure the students would bridge the gap and prepare them for the academic rigor of higher education.

The school presented opportunities for students who want to be challenged by dual enrollment classes. Dual enrollment means students receive high school and college credit for passing courses. College tuition is expensive, and the school wanted to help the school community and those going to higher education by reducing the units needed to graduate. The partnership with local junior colleges and a program with local four-year universities made these opportunities possible.

Catholic schools foster a unique community that promotes faith-based values, such as resilience and belonging, which may prevent or lessen potential mental health concerns (Wodon, 2020). There is a mission-driven expectation that the school educates the whole child which requires strong relationships with families (Dickel & Ishii-Jordan, 2008). The school continued to build the "whole" student using current and future resources. As the plans for academic growth occur in the classroom, spiritual growth occurs in celebration of Mass, adoration of the Eucharist, and retreats. The faith-based curriculum and environment set by the school aid in the students' spiritual growth during their four years. The 2020-2021 school year focused on improving the school community's mental wellness awareness and resources. The administration welcomed two licensed mental health counselors to work with the school community rather than

students going to teachers, academic counselors, and administrators for advice. Administrators, teachers, and academic counselors attended professional development workshops focusing on socioemotional learning.

Before the 2020-2021 school year began, the diocese advertised webinars for socioemotional learning. According to Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), socioemotional learning is the ability of children and adults to apply and acquire attitudes, knowledge, and skills to manage emotions, show empathy for others, establish supportive relationships and make caring and responsible decisions (Curby et al., 2013). Therefore, the series of webinars was very beneficial. As a result, the school administration decided to implement socioemotional learning.

The Dean of Guidance also noticed an increasing number of students going through anxiety and stress compared to prior years. The teachers were to check for the mental status of the students through different assessments and activities taught in the webinars. The administration clarifies that no one on campus is trained and licensed in mental health counseling. If there were concerns, the school would provide the resources for the students to receive the help they needed.

Unfortunately, this was not enough. I still remember the phone call I received from a teacher at 2 am in October. One of our former students died by suicide, and the event sent shock waves throughout the community. Some current students were close to this individual, and the death caused a decrease in their mental wellness. This devastating event caused the awareness that the school needed a licensed mental health counselor on campus. Sadly, the media across the nation discussed the number of suicides due to students' mental wellness.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the activities and relations around the world (Hashem et al., 2020). Anyone living through the pandemic knows that 10 out of 10 individuals confronted at least one psychological challenge adjusting to the new world (Hayes et al., 2020). The social isolation of students has been linked with mental health problems due to externalizing and internalizing problems (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). Various adverse events such as extreme changes in behavioral and emotional patterns and eating and sleeping patterns increased levels of anxiety and reduced social interactions have damaging psychological effects on children (Marchetti et al., 2020).

School closures confined students at home, reducing outdoor activities and social interactions and causing an increase in screen time (Schmidt et al., 2020). The increased screen time increased potential exposure to different media types, such as the news and social media. During the school closures, the media focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, causing anxiety symptoms to increase (Millar et al., 2021). School closures also influenced students' sedentary lifestyles and physical inactivity due to canceling physical education classes and sports (Anca-Raluca, 2021).

Remote Learning

The COVID-19 pandemic caused fear and anxiety around the world because, as a novel virus, no one knew about its causes or effects. Medical and public health researchers have uncovered much information during the past three years, including the spread of droplets from the mouth from speaking, breathing, sneezing, and coughing. Symptoms are very similar to pneumonia, a cold, or flu, and some people may or may not feel symptoms. Older adults, especially those with underlying health conditions, are at greater risk of severe illness from

COVID-19 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). As infection rates and deaths increased, countries closed their cities using various lockdown guidelines. In California, families followed a stay-at-home order. As a result, workers were working at home, students were learning remotely, and front-line workers continued to supply citizens with food, medical help, and other necessary needs.

March 2020 impacted instruction in the classroom for both teachers and students across the nation. Due to COVID-19, schools were closed down to prioritize the health and safety of employees, students, and their families. As a result, teachers and students had to prepare for remote learning in a short amount of time. Remote learning blends traditional and online instructional techniques while students and teachers are in different locations (Ramachandran & Rodriguez, 2020). Remote learning was an unprecedented “exercise” that burdened schools, students, and families (Brom et al., 2020).

In the realm of education, teachers and students were working remotely. Teachers were teaching through computer screens, and students were working independently. Even though there was instruction, it still did not compare to in-classroom instruction. Children who have solid emotional and social skills perform better in school, have better positive relationships with adults and peers, and have more positive mental health (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Hybrid Learning

In March 2021, the local government agency allowed a limited number of students to return to school. Schools like Bishop John Paul Academy used the hybrid learning model to allow students to come onto campus while following COVID-19 guidelines. Pesen (2014) defined hybrid learning as an ideal approach for combining the strongest aspects of classroom

and online learning and developing the knowledge and communication skills necessary for success. The administration spent days preparing the school to ensure they were safe to open. For example, the administration placed social distancing stickers on the floor, posted local government agency posters around the campus, and made sure the school had enough disinfectants, masks, and testing kits. Lastly, the administration had to create four different in-person cohorts.

The teachers returned a week before the school opened up for hybrid learning. The administration wanted to reestablish the classroom environment for the teachers by having them come in to instruct during the last week of remote learning. The teachers were trained in disinfecting their rooms, ensuring their desks were following the social distancing guidelines and preparing them for any scenarios that could happen during hybrid learning.

After the first week, there were a few challenges that occurred. Teachers had difficulty giving the same attention to both remote and on-campus students, ensuring students were wearing their masks correctly and socially distancing, and continuing to disinfect their classrooms. Students were having difficulty adjusting to coming back to school due to the COVID guidelines, wearing masks, checking in with temperature checks and COVID-19 symptom surveys, and readjusting to face-to-face instruction. The administration faced challenges due to keeping the campus safe, checking daily for new guidelines, and contact tracing becoming a priority. The new priorities took the place of the job description and delayed normal duties.

Even though hybrid learning presented its challenges, there were positives that could help education post-pandemic. The use of blended learning could assist students who were absent due

to sickness. Teachers could post lectures, assignments, and supplemental tools for students who needed extra resources were absent due to illness or wanted to learn remotely.

Return to In-person Learning

In August 2021, students were allowed to return to school full-time with local government agency COVID-19 guidelines. Teachers and students were still mandated to wear masks, social distancing, perform COVID-19 screenings, and help disinfect their classrooms. The administration was still ensuring campus safety and following all local government guidelines. The only difference was students were learning in the classroom five times a day without a modified bell schedule.

The return to school displayed a few of the repercussions of remote and hybrid learning. At Bishop John Paul Academy students' organization skills and motivation were below normal. The lack of social interaction affected students' behaviors in classrooms. Students were expected to be able to perform the same pre-pandemic workload. Teachers would return to a regular bell schedule. Some teachers had a hard time teaching full block periods. Teachers were worried more about classroom management than normal.

These challenges caused students and teachers to burn out due to workload and stress. The administrators sent out a mental health survey to all stakeholders, faculty/staff, students, and parents. The viability of the school could be enhanced by the input of school leaders, parents, and other stakeholders as they adapt to changing conditions. (Giunco et al., 2020). Once the administration received the surveys and analyzed the data, it showed that more than 80% of the teachers and students were burnt out or stressed out due to workload. The administration created a plan for due dates and workload restrictions, but there was still tension on campus. There were

more fights on campus in one week than in the previous seven years. The administration decided to create every Friday beginning in March a mental health day, calling it asynchronous Fridays.

Asynchronous Fridays provided teachers and students the ability to work from home to complete low stake assignments or makeup/catch up on work. The administration also allowed teachers and students to wear sweats on Mondays for the month of April. It allowed teachers and students to come to school relaxed and comfortable. For some, it felt like they were learning or teaching from home. The pandemic raised challenges, but Bishop John Paul Academy's community showed their resilience to overcome the challenges in front of them as individuals and as a community.

Lasting Impacts of the Pandemic on Educators

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the field of education, forcing educators to adapt quickly to new and constantly evolving circumstances. As schools worldwide shut down to contain the spread of the virus, teachers had to rapidly transition to remote and hybrid learning models, often with limited resources and training. Already, teaching is a highly stressful profession, particularly for new teachers who lack experience (Johnson et al., 2005). While educators have risen to the challenge, the pandemic has affected their mental health, work-life balance, and overall job satisfaction. When teachers face high demands and limited resources, burnout, and stress are common outcomes (Kotowski et al., 2022). Many have had to juggle the demands of teaching with caring for their own families and loved ones, leading to burnout and stress. Others have been forced to navigate new technologies and online platforms without adequate support or training.

In addition to the responsibility of teaching students with varying needs and levels of motivation, teachers had to navigate a constantly evolving role that was underpaid and subject to public scrutiny (Brown & Nagel, 2004). They often received little support from administrators, struggled to build positive relationships with colleagues, and faced overwhelming class sizes, time constraints, inadequate resources, and conflicting demands (Kyriacou, 1987). Over time, these challenges could lead to stress and burnout among teachers, which had been linked to lower self-efficacy, job performance, job satisfaction, physical and psychological health issues, and high turnover rates (Geving, 2007).

Recent research suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted teachers, causing them significant distress. They were concerned about their health and their students, particularly those at high risk (Carreon et al., 2021). Studies investigating the effects of COVID-19 on teachers found that rates of anxiety, depression, and stress were much higher during the pandemic than before (Kumawat, 2020). Stress is an unpleasant emotional state triggered by specific environmental factors and is often accompanied by anxiety, frustration, tension, and anger (Kyriacou, 2001).

The evidence suggested that the pandemic negatively affected teachers' well-being and job satisfaction, leading to increased burnout worldwide (Alves et al., 2021). Consequently, the turnover rate for teachers more than doubled during the pandemic (Pressley, 2021). Looking ahead, the lasting impacts of the pandemic on educators are likely to be significant. Ultimately, the pandemic has highlighted educators' vital role in society and the need for greater investment in their well-being and professional development.

Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic had greatly impacted school experiences for students and teachers alike. Schools had to shift to remote learning, implement social distancing measures, and cancel in-person events and extracurricular activities. These changes have resulted in increased stress and anxiety, difficulty in maintaining social connections, and unequal access to technology and resources. The pandemic has also highlighted existing disparities in the education system and the need for solutions to address them.

The combination of social isolation and school disruption caused students to experience high-stress levels. The impacts of these experiences were ongoing, even as students have returned to in-person schooling. A fuller understanding of a high school community's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years was needed to determine how to promote, and protective factors foster their resilience.

During remote and hybrid learning, students were in their homes learning. Research has indicated that the lack of face-to-face interaction and stresses of independent learning presented students with mental health challenges, including increased anxiety or loneliness (Gazmararian et al., 2021). The pandemic brought many uncomfortable experiences to students, including frustration, tension, isolation, and fear (Katz et al., 2020).

In addition, there was a lack of time to prepare for student learning. Teachers and students had to prepare for remote learning in a short amount of time. In a physical classroom, teachers were empowered to discover tools to assess students' progression. Students had access to resources to supplement their learning needs. The pandemic limited teachers' ability to build

relationships, care, and trust to set cultural norms in the classroom. Students were limited with supplies from home and what was given to them by their school site.

Purpose

This study aimed to understand the Bishop John Paul Academy community's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and how protective and promotive factors fostered their resilience. Using a qualitative method, the study gathered and analyzed data using the critical narratives of eight Bishop John Paul Academy community members' experiences during remote and hybrid instruction and the return to face-to-face instruction during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. The eight community members comprised four students, two teachers, one counselor, and one administrator. The eight Bishop John Paul Academy community members reflected on the promotive and protective factors that contributed to their resilience during the various challenges presented to them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theoretical Framework

Resilience Theory

In 1970, a systematic theory and research on human resilience began to emerge after several decades of observing, developing theories, conducting research, and practicing approaches related to how trauma and stress affected individuals' and families' functioning and development (Walsh, 1993). During the 20th century, large-scale disasters affecting millions of children and families worldwide motivated clinicians and scientists to gain a deeper understanding of how adversity could impact human adaptation and how to reduce the associated risks or aid in recovery (Masten, 2016). Soon, studies were initiated shortly after that focused on individuals and families who had experienced traumatic loss, violence, separation, injury, torture,

homelessness, and other effects of economic, natural, and political disasters (Masten et al., 2015).

The pioneering researchers who studied resilience in children and families made a significant breakthrough by acknowledging the significance of comprehending the factors that fostered positive adaptation or lessened the impact of risk or adversity. Although researchers recognized that some individuals or families were more susceptible to adversity, they also observed that some people seemed better equipped to handle or recover from traumatic events or family crises than others who experienced similar situations (Nichols, 2013). In certain situations, these protective effects were linked to positive characteristics that were known to mitigate the impact of adversities such as poverty or violence on children or families, such as good emotion regulation or problem-solving skills. On the other hand, in some cases, the protective factors, such as having a supportive friend or mentor, were different from the vulnerabilities typically examined in earlier stress models.

Researchers studying the origins and causes of mental health issues began to systematically examine individual resilience in the clinical sciences, particularly in areas focused on the impact of adversity on mental health and development (Masten, 2014). These investigators included Anthony (Anthony & Cohler, 1987), Garmezy (1983), Murphy (Murphy & Moriarty, 1976), Rutter (1979, 1987), and Werner (Werner & Smith, 1982). These influential researchers acknowledged the importance of the remarkable diversity in adaptive functioning and life experiences among young people considered “at-risk” due to factors such as their family or genetic background, exposure to trauma, or poverty. The observation of positive adjustment in

high-risk samples and individual cases implied that crucial factors related to coping and adaptation were not being fully captured by focusing solely on risk and pathological processes.

Defining Resilience

Resilience highlighted the importance of adaptation and reorganization in response to stressful situations, rather than simply “bouncing back” to the pre-stressor state. (Baumber et al., 2021, Smith et al., 2008). Resilience involves learning how to make changes, cope, and achieve positive outcomes when facing different risk factors that can disrupt normal development (Garmezy et al., 1984; Walker, 2019). Resilience is also strongly recommended as a way to promote student well-being because it emphasized an individual’s ability to navigate and cope in stressful environments, which can have a positive impact (Hartley, 2011). Resilience is critical for promoting adaptive recovery and could help mitigate threats to an individual’s well-being by helping them stabilize in the face of adversity (Leipold et al., 2019). Resilience theorists have attempted to identify factors that could increase or decrease resilience in complex systems (Carpenter et al., 2012).

Studies have demonstrated that resilience is positively associated with measures of mental health. (Hu et al., 2015). The positive correlation between mental health and resilience became more prominent after exposure to significant adversity. Positive adjustment was linked to resilience, which involves overcoming risk through development. Therefore, exposure to stress was necessary (Luthar et al., 2000). Positive development alone was not enough to confirm the presence of resilience. There must also be a prior or existing risk that could potentially disrupt development (Werner, 1992). However, the process of developing resilience was

complex, and the effectiveness of various protective factors may vary depending on the particular risk being addressed and the outcome being examined (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005).

Promotive and Protective Processes

Various resilience theorists have attempted to identify factors that can either increase or decrease resilience in complex systems (Carpenter et al., 2012). According to Sameroff (2000), “promotive factors”—also referred to as “assets” or “resources”—were typically linked to positive outcomes across various levels of risk. On the other hand, protective factors appeared to have a particularly important role to play when the level of adversity was high. The difference between promotive and protective factors, as described by Sameroff (2000), could be likened to the statistical concepts of “main” effects and “moderating” or “interaction” effects, as noted by Masten (2001). Protective factors contributing to resilience could arise from various sources, including individual characteristics, social environments, and family dynamics (Werner, 1992). For instance, studies have shown that adolescents who were resilient in the face of adversity tend to have more family social support and positive relationships compared to their less resilient counterparts (Carbonell et al., 2002). More recently, a study found that family social support protects against depression (Rueger et al., 2016).

Parent-child Relationship

In families with children, parenting has been identified as a critical factor in family resilience by family theorists and therapists (Fernandez et al., 2013). Parent-child interactions are essential to resilience as parenting plays many roles in child development, cultural transmission, and society’s well-being (Bornstein, 2015). Doty et al. (2017) proposed a “cascading resilience” model highlighting parenting as a catalyst for change. Parents provide care and protection to

children during their early years of development, fostering the development of adaptive systems that individuals use to cope with challenges throughout their lives. Additionally, they pass down cultural knowledge and practices that support resilience at various levels, from individuals to societies (Masten, 2016).

To ensure healthy brain development, learning, and social skills, parents were expected to protect their children from excessive stress (Blair & Raver, 2016). However, exposing children to some manageable stress was also important as it could help them develop valuable coping skills and self-confidence (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2016). Furthermore, neurobiological systems that regulate responses to stress can adapt unconsciously.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, adolescents have faced numerous challenges that tested their resilience. However, studies have demonstrated that they employed different approaches to maintaining their resilience. For instance, Knight et al. (2019) found that optimism could be utilized to cope with the feelings of confinement resulting from quarantine. Similarly, Trzebiński et al. (2020) showed that cultivating basic hope enhanced the sense of satisfaction and meaning in life, reducing the anxiety and stress associated with the pandemic. Mana and Sagy (2020) found that students' sense of solidarity positively indicates mental health.

Research Questions

Two questions guided this qualitative research:

1. First, what were the experiences of the Bishop John Paul Academy community during the COVID-19 pandemic, including remote learning, hybrid learning, and the return to campus?

2. What promotive and protective factors fostered resilience among the Bishop John Paul Academy community during the pandemic?

Methodology and Design

Research Design

This study used a qualitative design to explore participants' experiences through in-depth interviews and the construction of narratives. These narratives focused on personal experiences during different phases of the COVID-19 pandemic and aimed to provide participants with opportunities to reflect critically on the impact of the experience, including the promotive and protective factors that influenced their resilience.

Choosing the Participants

Once the study was approved by Loyola Marymount University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I began the search for participants. Since this was a phenomenological study, selecting interview participants was a crucial step in conducting research that aimed to explore the experiences, perspectives, and insights of individuals who experienced education during the pandemic. It was important to interview teachers, students, and administrators who could provide valuable insights into their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initial step was obtaining the school's permission to conduct the interviews. After approval, I identified potential interview participants who met the study criteria: 18-year-old students, teachers, staff, and administrators. I emailed all faculty, staff, and administration (Appendix A), and 18-year-old students (Appendix B) discussing the research project and how to contact me if they are interested. After waiting a week for interested participants, six students, two teachers, one counselor, and one administrator reached out. While I scheduled interviews

with all interested participants, only eight of the ten who responded completed the Zoom interview.

Participants

Eight participants were four past Bishop John Paul Academy students, one past teacher, one current teacher, counselor, and administrator who experienced remote and hybrid learning and the return to face-to-face instruction at the school. The past students were 18-year-old seniors who graduated in 2022.

Procedures

Interviews

An interview was conducted with current and past students, teachers, counselors, and administrators. The 30- to 45-minute interviews were conducted over Zoom. The Zoom interviews were recorded and transcribed with the subject's parental consent. The initial questions (Appendix C) reflected their pre-pandemic lives in the classroom, both academically and socially. These initial questions built rapport and created a safe space for the student or teacher to speak. The following questions described their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview finished with questions about their promotive and protective factors and how their resilience coped with the challenges of the pandemic. After recording the Zoom, I exported the audio file into a transcription program called Otter.ai (otter.ai, 7/5/2022).

Analytical Plan

Inductive Coding

Inductive coding began following the transcription of the interviews. According to Saldana (2009), a code is a symbol, either a word or short phrase, representing a concise,

significant, and memorable attribute of a language-based or visual data section. This attribute may be a summary, a notable characteristic, a central essence, or a thought-provoking image. Inductive coding allowed me to derive categories and themes directly from the data rather than imposing preconceived ideas or theories onto the analysis. I looked for similarities, differences, frequencies, and causation patterns. All these patterns were refined and revised their codes, collapsing similar codes into broader themes or breaking down complex themes into more specific sub-codes. These sub-codes reflected main themes, further analyzed through an analytic memo.

Analytic Memo

Analytic memos helped me record, analyze, and interpret data. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) suggested that the way in which themes are identified and emphasized, or “thematized,” should be guided by the overall research design and the conceptualization of research questions, objectives, and the existing literature on the topic. In each memo, I highlighted key themes, patterns, or insights that emerged from the eight interviews. It helped me gather my thoughts and ideas from the interview data. They also helped me document, using a spreadsheet, insights into the research questions and guided further analysis.

Significance of Study/Relationship to Social Justice

The significance of studying the impact of the pandemic on school experiences lies in understanding the long-term effects on students, teachers, and the education system as a whole. This information could inform policies and initiatives aimed at improving remote learning, addressing disparities in access to resources, and ensuring the well-being of students and teachers. Additionally, understanding the challenges faced during the pandemic could also

inform future planning and preparation for similar situations. Studying school experiences during the pandemic could provide valuable insights and contribute to improving the education system for all.

The relationship between the pandemic and social justice in the context of school experiences and mental health was significant. Academics, extracurricular activities, and socialization revolved around a high school student in a school setting. The sudden shift to remote learning, social distancing measures, and cancellations of in-person events have profoundly impacted students' mental health. These critical developmental factors were removed from the youth when school doors closed. In addition, the isolation of students from socialization affected students' mental wellness in various ways—the critical narratives of students' personal experiences during this significant time in history. The stress and uncertainty brought on by the pandemic, coupled with the isolation and lack of social support, have increased anxiety levels.

However, not all students have been equally affected by the pandemic's impact on mental health. Even before the pandemic began, there was evidence that mental health challenges among US students were increasing. By 2019, 1 in 3 high school students reported “persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness,” and about 1 in 6 students reported creating a suicide plan within the last year, a 44% increase from 2009 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention revealed that between April and October of 2020, mental-health-related emergency room arrivals for children ages 5 to 11 increased by 24% over the same period in 2019. While 12 to 17-year-olds increased by 31% (Warner, 2020). Disadvantaged students, who may already face greater stress and trauma daily,

have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and may have limited access to mental health resources.

The importance of student attendance is twofold: it matters on an individual level as educators aim to address the loss of learning time, and it also matters on a schoolwide level as states resume their federally mandated educational accountability systems, which were previously excused from many requirements under the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, or *ESSA*, (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2023). Before the pandemic, about 8 million students (1 in 7 nationwide) were chronically absent, according to data from the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Blad, 2018; Blad, 2022). A parent survey revealed that 22% of respondents reported their child had missed four or more school days. The pandemic appeared to have amplified the difficulties that lower-income families had with attendance in preceding years (Dorn et al., 2021). The local public school district had nearly half of its students classified as chronically absent, which was more than twice the pre-pandemic rate. The absenteeism rate for African American students was almost 57%, for Latinx, it was 49%, and for students experiencing homelessness, it was 68% (Esquivel, 2022).

Households with lower incomes may not have had access to the necessary equipment, such as personal computers and high-speed internet, to facilitate remote schooling (Dolan, 2016). These challenges could be even greater in households with multiple school-aged children, each requiring attention and their own computer. This could create a significant obstacle for students who must attend virtual classes or complete online assignments. During the pandemic, low-income families may face increased financial stress. Parents who earned daily wages or cannot work from home may have to leave their children at home without adequate supervision, which

could have long-term consequences for the child's education. Additionally, families may lack the resources or materials necessary to support their children's learning at home, such as textbooks, school supplies, or reference materials. Remote learning required a quiet and dedicated workspace, which can be difficult for families living in small apartments or crowded homes. The closure of schools also disproportionately affected children who relied on school feeding programs and whose families may have lower levels of education, fewer resources, and limited access to support (Garbe et al., 2020).

Therefore, addressing the relationship between the pandemic and social justice in the context of school experiences and mental health was crucial to ensure that all students had access to the support they needed to academically and emotionally thrive. Addressing social justice in this context meant advocating for policies and programs prioritizing mental health, providing access to resources, and addressing the root causes of stress and trauma in students' lives. Hopefully, this study will create new research opportunities for mental wellness during the pandemic or post-pandemic, or an administrator can use it as a resource.

Positionality

As an educator who has taught at elementary, middle, and high school levels, there had been an improvement in students' mental wellness recognition. Students were more aware of their feelings compared to the past. When I was growing up, showing my emotions was a sign of weakness, especially as a cultural and gender norm. As a teenage student-athlete, it was stressful to maintain a grade point average expected by my parents and try to compete at a high level every day in athletics. At that time, I looked like a swan on the outside, calm and collected, but

on the inside, I looked like the swan's feet under the water, pure chaos. At this stage in my life, I wish I had someone to talk to and unload the weight of emotions and stress on my shoulders.

When I taught my child development class, I always told my students to allow their future children to provide a safe space for their children to express their feelings, especially at a young age. The safe space builds the relationship between the parents and children and resilience with the young children. Conversely, the lack of this safe space could negatively affect children. Children will have a distant relationship with their parents, and in most cases, they will not know how to cope in challenging situations.

Before the pandemic began, I noticed the trend of the increase in students' challenges in their mental health. As a teacher, I had students coming into my classroom before or after school or during break or lunch, venting to me about the stresses and anxieties of their lives. I warn these students that I am here to listen and cannot give them any advice since I am not licensed. As a teacher, I felt like the administration would not listen to my suggestions.

A few years later, I became an administrator. I wanted to ensure that all students and teachers had everything they needed to succeed inside and outside the classroom. During my first year in administration, I would meet with my counselors to discuss the needs of the students. One concern was the need for a mental health counselor. Unfortunately, we could not afford a mental health counselor in our budget.

In March, schools shut their doors, and education was traveling on an unknown road. The road had various obstacles, and many route adjustments had to be made. The counselors' and administrators' phones were daily receiving calls and emails. Besides technology problems, the student's attendance and mental wellness were concerns of parents and students themselves.

Over the summer, the administration re-evaluated the school community's remote learning experience through surveys and "town hall" meetings.

When we returned, the looming question of mental health counselors was still of concern. Due to the school's financial situation, we could not hire or partner with mental health counselors. In October 2020, one of our students decided to take his own life. The school community was devastated. The need for mental health counselors was in need. The school reached out to the diocese, and they answered the school's prayers.

The diocese helped partner the school with an area counseling organization. The school ensured mental health counselors were included in the following year's budget, especially since the school is in a better financial position. Currently, mental health counselors have been fully booked every day. Although it was good, the students were using these resources. It was concerning what challenges they were going through with returning to school. This study reinforced remote learning experiences for these students to give educators an idea of their emerging mental wellness for the return to face-to-face instruction.

Limitations

Sample

A small qualitative sample size cannot be an adequate generalization for all high school students and teachers' experiences during remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. All participants' experiences were from a single school. The sample of students, teachers, or staff available at a specific school site may not be representative of the larger population, which could limit the generalizability of the findings.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods such as surveys, interviews, and observations may not be able to capture all the aspects of the school site's experiences during the pandemic. The scope of research may be limited to a specific aspect or subject of the school site's experiences during the pandemic, which could make it difficult to gather a comprehensive data set. The experiences during the pandemic were relatively recent, and thus memories of those events may be affected by recency bias, which could limit the accuracy of the data collected. The researcher may be subject to bias in their observations and data collection due to the location and participants of the study, which could limit the validity and reliability of the findings.

Delimitations

Subjects Chosen

The chosen subjects went through remote, hybrid, and return to face-to-face instruction at Bishop John Paul Academy. There was also an assumption that these students had protective or promotive factors contributing to their resilience during the pandemic.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW
The Impact of COVID-19

Researchers have focused on identifying risk factors that could have a negative impact on an individual's psychological well-being (Piqueras et al., 2017). Studies have established a negative association between psychological well-being and perceived distress (Meng & D'Arcy, 2016). The lockdown measures implemented in cities worldwide led to feelings of uncertainty (Corbera et al., 2020) and fear about the future (Das, 2020), resulting in psychological distress. Symptoms of distress, such as pain, were observed in students during the lockdown period (Odriozola-González et al., 2020).

Teachers experienced higher levels of anxiety during the first wave of the pandemic, according to reports by Li et al. (2020). While Sokal et al. (2020) found that there was a difference between how much stress teachers reported and how effectively they coped with it. During the lockdown, teachers identified their workload as the most stressful factor, as per MacIntyre et al. (2020). Initially, the sudden shift to distance learning posed challenges for teachers, including a lack of in-person relationships and community, as well as insufficient training and preparation, according to studies by Barbour and Harrison (2016), and Graham et al. (2019). However, teachers were able to adapt to their students' new challenges and need over time, as noted by Kim and Asbury (2020).

Research indicated that maintaining a sense of well-being could help prevent the development of mental health issues (Chambel & Curren, 2005) and serve as a buffer against stress (Serrano & Andreu, 2016). As a result, various prevention and intervention programs have

been developed to promote health-protective factors and overall well-being (Sommers-Spijkerman et al., 2018). Additionally, empathy and emotional intelligence have been recognized as crucial components of emotional education, aimed at helping young people build the skills needed to manage stress and academic pressures (Schoeps et al., 2020).

During the lockdown and school closures, adolescents have reported perceiving changes in different aspects such as relationships, social support, health, and mental health, uncertainty about the future, and educational challenges. Several studies have identified a lack of motivation, distractions, and difficulty learning online as significant challenges for adolescents in terms of school during this time (Beames et al., 2020; McKinlay et al., 2021).

In various studies, developing emotional abilities and skills had been linked to mental health and well-being. Emotional repair, for instance, has been identified as a protective factor against the negative effects of stress on the quality of life (Extremera et al., 2007). Conversely, students who exhibit emotional suppression report lower anxiety in stressful situations (Schoeps et al., 2020). Students who paid more attention to their emotions reported less anxiety and fewer social problems than those with lower emotional awareness, particularly in low-stress situations (Hodzic et al., 2016).

Social Problems

When school doors closed on March 13, 2020, students went home without knowing what was ahead of them. Families were ordered to stay in their houses and could only leave for food, necessary health care, care for a friend or relative, or go to an essential job (California Department of Public Health, 2020). Students were now isolated from their friends, athletics and

other extracurricular activities were canceled, and talking to a teacher in person was improbable. The isolation caused various challenges to the students' mental wellness.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing measures impacted more than 55 million students, limiting their social interactions with peers and teachers and reducing academic activities that supported their social, emotional, and mental well-being (Garcia & Weiss, 2020). As a result, there was an increase in academic stress and workload, and students reported higher levels of loneliness, which had a more significant impact on depression than academic grades or demands (Newcomb-Anjo et al., 2017). Many students who quickly shifted to online learning experienced demotivation, social isolation, and displacement, and some of these feelings may have been intensified by pandemic-related anxiety (Hall & Batty, 2020; Ryan, 2021; Yamin, 2020).

Individuals who perceived stress as threatening to tend to view it negatively and as having significant consequences. Prolonged exposure to stress was associated with higher utilization of support services and increased levels of psychological distress, according to Haldorsen et al. (2014). There was strong evidence linking mental health problems, loneliness, and depression with social isolation, even after a nine-year period, among children and adolescents, according to Hertz and Barrios (2020). Withdrawal from daily activities such as attending school and socializing, along with feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear, increased the risk of developing psychiatric disorders in the future, even among those with no prior history, according to de Figueiredo et al. (2021).

Emotional Problems

Fear is a natural defense mechanism that people use to protect themselves from dangerous situations, and it includes necessary reactions for survival during threatening circumstances (Seçer & Ulaş, 2021). Research indicated that fear of contracting COVID-19 resulted in severe emotional and behavioral consequences such as sleep disturbances, loneliness, boredom, anger, and anxiety (Brooks et al., 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) had also reported that elevated anxiety and stress levels were the most common psychological outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic. Quarantine and isolation also led to other negative mental health consequences. These measures increased the risks of substance abuse, loneliness, and suicidal behavior or self-harm among the general population (Czeisler et al., 2020; Hervalejo et al., 2020).

Adolescents and children were more adversely affected by stressors such as lack of face-to-face interaction with peers and teachers, boredom, fear of infection, financial strain, inadequate information, and limited personal space at home (Wang et al., 2020). In quarantined children, posttraumatic stress scores were four times higher than those who were not. The increase in negative events was linked to a lack of effective coping strategies, resulting in increased trauma and stress (Askeland et al., 2020). These coping strategies are usually developed and identified with the help of adults.

Changes in health-related behaviors and daily routines, such as increased screen time and decreased physical activity, negatively affect children's mental health (Rakickienė et al., 2021). These changes, along with delayed returns to school or home confinement, led to the unavailability of emotional support from teachers, family members, and other significant adults,

a decrease in physical activity, isolation from sports communities and teammates, and a lack of social support. These factors negatively affected children's psychophysical state, resulting in emotional distress (Mehrsafar et al., 2020; Sprang & Silman, 2013). Additionally, physical distancing measures contribute to social isolation, which is associated with mental health problems such as anxiety and stress (Leigh-Hunt et al., 2017). These negative impacts on mental health could directly affect students' academic performance.

Behavioral Problems

Children's behavior could be negatively impacted by changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, losing face-to-face learning environments and access to in-person interaction could negatively affect non-cognitive and psychosocial skills, including self-control, creativity, and empathy (Garcia & Weiss, 2020). Although children may be less susceptible than adults to COVID-19 infection, they may be more vulnerable from a psychological perspective, experiencing fear, behavioral problems, and anxiety due to pandemic-induced isolation (Jiao et al., 2020). The challenges faced by students include inadequate adjustments to workload, difficulty in fostering creativity, lack of feedback and communication, struggles in staying motivated, and disruption in learning (Shin & Kasey Hickey, 2021).

Student Experiences During the Pandemic

Experiences During COVID-19

To many students, academic stress is perceived as being strongly linked to increased levels of loneliness and academic workload, and it may have a greater impact on stress and anxiety than academic demands or grades (Newcomb-Anjo et al., 2017). For those who viewed stress negatively and as a serious threat or consequence, exposure to constant stress was

associated with higher utilization of support services and greater psychological distress (Haldorsen et al., 2014). Students who reported greater negative impacts on their mental health were more likely to attribute it to stress related to classwork, social distancing, time management, and the negative effect on their socialization with peers (Varadarajan et al., 2021). Government-imposed guidelines for isolation and social distancing have led to increases in the development of disorders such as depression, insomnia, stress, irritability, and psychological distress (Brooks et al., 2020).

To maintain academic motivation and performance during the pandemic, students required access to digital learning, a supportive home environment, social connections with peers and teachers, and stable technological infrastructure (Balayar & Langlais, 2021). The shift to remote learning disrupted students' routines and created obstacles to productivity, leaving students feeling overwhelmed and lacking control over their lives (Bolumole, 2020; Killhama et al., 2021). Flexibility in adapting to these changes was identified as critical for students to manage their new circumstances successfully.

Students experienced frustration as the primary negative emotion during remote learning, which stemmed from various sources such as the difficulty of regulating their study time and workload, unclear instructions resulting from the online environment, inequitable division of work during group projects, unfamiliar testing formats, and varying levels of commitment to work among peers (Pentaraki & Burkholder, 2017). Additionally, the absence of interaction and communication in their classes due to the absence of remote teaching protocols also caused frustration among students (Stewart & Lowenthal, 2021).

According to Kocdar et al. (2018), students often struggle with self-pacing and self-regulating their learning and engagement in online learning environments. Students were required to manage their time and organizational skills independently to complete assignments and classes on time without procrastination (Govindarajan & Srivastava, 2020). Procrastination could be caused by various distractions, and students have reported that their attention span was shorter at home than in a traditional educational setting (Obi & Ticha, 2021). Students must create a comfortable environment that fosters focus and productivity to succeed in remote learning.

To effectively engage in remote learning, students often encountered attention-related problems. They were required to use new technologies while simultaneously limiting screen time and digital work duration (Tan et al., 2020). To overcome these challenges, students could break tasks into smaller chunks and create a structured study schedule. In group work, they must coordinate, prioritize, and schedule tasks among members, interact with teachers, participate actively online, and be adaptable (Tan et. al, 2020).

School Response

Adequate support can mitigate the negative effects of stress on mental health and lead to full recovery (Raffaelli et al., 2013). However, young people often prefer to handle psychological distress on their own, and this, coupled with feelings of embarrassment and stigma, could discourage them from seeking formal help (Gulliver et al., 2010). In addition, students who suffered from anxiety or depression and failed to receive support often reported being unaware of available resources and services (Eisenberg et al., 2007). Students with higher levels of anxiety or depression may have more difficulty seeking help, highlighting the need for

the educational system to increase awareness, education, and accessibility of mental health resources, including online resources (Ryan et al., 2010).

Teacher Supports Received

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the educational field, and teachers' professional role is essential to promote students' learning (Johnson, 2017 ; Martí-González et al., 2023; Johnson, 2017). The rapid shift to remote learning highlighted the need for school leaders to provide teachers with proper training and equipment to effectively use digital resources (Martí-González et al., 2023). Ensuring accessibility to resources and teachers' availability for academic engagement was also crucial during the pandemic (Donnelly & Patrinos, 2022). Unlike traditional online teaching methods that followed organized planning and design, the shift to remote learning occurred rapidly (Dietrich et al., 2020).

According to Supovitz's (2022) study, teachers' mental health and dedication to their profession were more secure when they have greater support and independence from school leaders. Superville (2022) emphasized the importance of targeted mental health assistance for teachers to create a thriving school environment. Supovitz (2022) found that certain groups of teachers face more significant mental health challenges than others during the pandemic, including teachers of color, early-career teachers, and those working in high-needs schools.

Student Supports Received

Mushtaque et al. (2021) suggested that support from teachers, families, and classmates was critical in cultivating a learning mindset. Kraft and Dougherty (2020) found that teachers' emotional support and beliefs about their competence could affect students' learning intentions. This relationship was expected to be especially significant during the COVID-19 pandemic when

teachers could provide support and inspiration (Curby et al., 2013). However, recent research has shown that children and adolescents have experienced high levels of stress, anxiety, and loneliness during the pandemic (Rogers et al., 2021). Their mental health and academic performance, including school attendance, appeared to be closely connected (Guimond et al., 2021).

Socioemotional Learning

Lee et al. (2021) defined socio-emotional learning (SEL) as a framework that encompasses students' acquisition and application of decision-making, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills, including cultural competency, empathy, anger management, grit, and self-efficacy. SEL had been found to contribute to positive socio-emotional outcomes for students, including a sense of belonging in the classroom environment (Delahunty et al., 2014). However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this sense of belonging because online learning was more asynchronous, socially isolated, and distributed than in-person learning (Lowenthal & Dennen, 2017). As a result, students have had limited opportunities for consistent synchronous social interactions with teachers and classmates, which could reduce social presence (Tang et al., 2021) and leave remote students feeling unmotivated, undervalued, and anonymous (Plante & Asselin, 2014).

To promote social and self-awareness and foster positive relationships and responsible decision-making, social-emotional learning encompassed competencies and attitudes that empowered students to regulate their own emotions and behaviors and those of others (Tardif-Grenier et al., 2021). Students who possessed these skills could successfully manage their emotions and behaviors and positively interacted with their peers during group activities

(Newman & Dusenbury, 2015). Above-average social-emotional skills were linked to academic success, increased motivation, and positive engagement with teachers and classmates (Engle et al., 2010). Conversely, students who struggle with social-emotional learning were at greater risk for behavioral, social, and academic issues (Fantuzzo et al., 2007).

Social Emotional Learning Programs

Programs that focused on socio-emotional learning aimed to help students regulate their emotions, develop healthy relationships, use effective coping mechanisms, and improve their communication abilities (Üzar-Özçetin & Hiçdurmaz, 2017). However, it was important to assess the effectiveness of such interventions by examining the skills learned and the curriculum used to ensure that the acquired skills could be applied (Dolev & Leshem, 2017).

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

To succeed in life, it was important to have “non-cognitive” skills as well as “cognitive” skills, which was what social-emotional learning (SEL) emphasized (Jones et al., 2015). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, or CASEL, (Dolev & Leshem, 2017) developed a five-factor SEL model that focused on various personal and social skills (Rothe et al., 2021). This model has garnered attention in emotional and social competency studies. The CASEL model’s five competencies include (1) self-management, which involves controlling emotions, behaviors, and thoughts; (2) self-awareness, which entails recognizing one's emotions and accurately evaluating their strengths and weaknesses; (3) social or cultural awareness, which involves being aware of the emotions and beliefs of the world and people around them; (4) relationship skills, which involve effective communication, building meaningful relationships, and working with peers; and (5) responsible decision-making, which

involves creating plans, contributing to others' well-being, and adhering to ethical/moral standards (Dolev & Leshem, 2017).

The CASEL model emphasized that the five competencies have a significant impact on both short-term and long-term outcomes, such as positive social behavior and attitudes, behavior issues, academic success, substance abuse, emotional distress, graduation rates, criminal behavior, engaged citizenship, and mental health (Durlak et al., 2015). Providing primary prevention programs that focused on SEL concepts to students at an early age could improve their self-regulation and resilience and equip them with the necessary skills to deal with difficult life situations they may face later on (Gitterman, 2014). Consistently reinforcing these lessons could help students continue developing their SEL competencies as they mature and encounter new experiences (Epstein et al., 2018).

Li and Zhou (2021) conducted a study to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the behavior of children. They investigated how emotions affected learning outcomes in face-to-face and online formats, finding that emotions significantly impacted the use of learning strategies. Additionally, the study found that self-efficacy, specifically hope, played a significant role in students' academic success more than the instructor's intent to support student learning. Another study by Sklad et al. (2012) examined the effects of school-based SEL programs and identified their most significant impact on academic achievement and reducing substance abuse, with moderate results seen for other outcomes such as mental health and social skills. The study recommends incorporating the five interconnected sets of core cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies into academic requirements for preschool to high school, including self-

awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Farrington et al. (2012) found evidence that SEL could enhance emotional intelligence, which involves identifying emotions in oneself and others, expressing emotions effectively, and using emotions to guide decision-making. Learning these skills may improve overall protective factors, promote positive mental health, and help manage negative situations (Wyman, 2014). SEL programs were preventative and focused on equipping students with social and emotional skills to navigate situations and relationships, which could prevent problem behavior from developing (Knight et al., 2019).

School Counselors

According to Gysbers and Henderson (2012), school counselors have a unique advantage in promoting social and emotional well-being and academic education due to their specialized training and professional standards. The American School Counselor Association (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2020) acknowledges that school counselors have the qualifications to provide instruction, assessment, advice, and short-term counseling to students and refer them and their families to additional resources. In comprehensive school counseling programs, school counselors were trained to address students' mental health concerns and promote social-emotional wellness through preventative and developmental support (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020). However, recent studies investigating school counselors' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic suggest that the lack of in-person interaction and increased non-counseling duties have posed significant challenges to delivering school-based support (Savitz-Romer et al., 2021).

According to Cook et al. (2019), school counselors play a critical role in evaluating the needs and providing care to school-aged children from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade. Adolescents who have experienced trauma often exhibit severe impulsivity, difficulties with higher-order thinking, and significant delays in sociability and academic performance in the long term, as noted by Howell et al. (2019). Students who have experienced trauma required consistent mental health services, which could be provided by school counselors in the short term during the school day, according to research by Strear et al. (2021). School counselors must be better equipped to support the whole student and respond to their needs after the pandemic, whether in-person or virtually, as highlighted by Alexander et al. (2022). Establishing structural support for teacher mental health would ultimately benefit everyone in the school building, including school leaders, as suggested by Will and Superville (2022).

Resilience

It was important to examine the combined effects of various protective factors that contributed to resilience since they were diverse and interrelated, according to Rueger et al. (2016). For example, when self-efficacy and coping strategies were considered, social support was no longer a distinguishing factor between resilient and vulnerable groups, as observed by Dumont and Provost (1999). Similarly, parental bonding only had a moderating effect on the relationship between adverse life events and depression when considered alone, not when cognitive strategies such as positive reappraisal were also taken into account, according to Versteeg and Kappe (2021).

Resiliency was crucial to maintain balance on both individual and societal levels, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic (Vinkers et al., 2020). Research on well-being

Covid-19 emphasized that resilience could mediate adverse outcomes related to stress and fears associated with the pandemic (Veronese et al., 2021). The challenge model of resilience (Fergusson & Zimmerman, 2005) suggested that a range of optimal stress exposure exists, within which individuals could develop resilient responses. Too low-stress levels could result in suboptimal resilient reactions, while too high levels could lead to adverse outcomes as stress exposure becomes overwhelming (Versteeg & Kappe, 2021).

Previous studies have reported that the presence of protective factors could alleviate the negative effects of collective actions on mental health (Ni et al., 2020a). Social and cultural factors, such as face-to-face interactions and community activities, have contributed to individual health and well-being differences during these incidents (Di Nicola, 2019). During the Covid-19 crisis, academic stress directly impacted students' perceived stress levels, while resilience had the greatest indirect mediating effect (Versteeg & Kappe, 2021).

Previous studies have shown that depression may weaken the protective effects of resilience, indicating that individuals with depression may have lower levels of resilience (Veronese et al., 2021). Factors such as personality traits, comorbidity, and poor problem-solving skills have been suggested to contribute to the development of depression (Rohde et al., 2013). The role of educational institutions in providing support to this vulnerable group of students required further investigation, particularly considering that increased psychological distress had been linked to academic failure and dropping out of school (Dopmeijer, 2021). Thus, it was important to explore both the levels of perceived distress and psychological well-being among students to help them overcome adversity during traumatic situations.

Developmental Systems

Resilience science emphasized the significance of recognizing positive adjustment patterns, both on an individual and systemic level, particularly during times of hardship (Masten, 2016). Additionally, strength-based approaches emphasized the importance of highlighting competencies and positive attributes in individuals and systems, which could contribute to adaptation and resilience (Jimerson et al., 2004).

Individual Resilience

Individual resilience could be defined as an individual's capacity to effectively deal with and recover from difficult situations or challenges, such as those presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, without negatively impacting their mental health or overall well-being. (Bonanno, 2004). Resilient individuals were characterized by their ability to accept and adapt to reality, maintain strong personal beliefs and values, and improvise in the face of significant changes. (Sonn & Fisher, 1998). They also tend to have a positive attitude toward problem-solving and could effectively navigate challenges, whereas individuals with low resilience tend to experience negative emotions and may struggle to overcome adversity (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Overall, building individual resilience was critical in promoting positive adaptation and successfully coping with the challenges presented by the pandemic, particularly in education (Ho & Chan, 2022).

Family and Community

To enhance children's education, it was important to involve their families (e.g., parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles) in educational efforts at home, school, and the community, including educational interactions with children, teachers, and other families (Dearing et al., 2006). The

key to increasing family participation in education was not their academic or socioeconomic background but rather the actions taken by schools that influenced their decisions to participate (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Family participation could be made more effective and consistent by implementing actions that improved children's learning and educational processes (Price-Mitchell, 2009).

Families actively engaged in their children's education had a better understanding of the curriculum and classroom expectations, resulting in improved learning at home (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015). The impact of social relationships, particularly within families, on mental health has been well-documented in numerous studies (Ryan et al., 2015). To effectively engage families, workers should possess specific skills, such as providing emotional support, listening without judgment, and offering substantial resources (Toros et al., 2018). Family practice models incorporated engagement components, family-driven planning, and strengths-based perspectives have been used in child welfare interventions (Sanclimenti et al., 2017; Toros et al., 2018). Supportive families may be more willing to provide emotional, instrumental, and informational support during difficult times, and stable family relationships could help individuals overcome adverse life events successfully (Wong et al., 2021).

Parental distress was identified as a significant risk factor for negative mental health outcomes in children during the COVID-19 quarantine (Adams et al., 2020). Therefore, investigating resilience and protective factors had become a crucial area of research, with evidence suggesting that protective factors could derive from individual, family, and community resources (Woods-Jaeger et al., 2018). The quality of family relationships, in particular, was an important factor, as it could provide children with sensitive, cooperative care and a secure base

for support (Waters & Cummings, 2000). Furthermore, research suggested that children were likely to adopt the same relationship-building strategies as their parents, underscoring the importance of exposure to healthy family relationships at an early age (Eng et al., 2001). Having a secure family environment in childhood could help children develop adaptive coping skills that were beneficial for seeking support and problem-solving in school.

Community members could foster a learning environment by engaging with children and believing in their learning abilities (Ramis & Krastina, 2010). To improve student outcomes, schools should integrate community-based learning with school-based learning. A shared sense of trust between parents, teachers, and administrators was crucial to developing conditions for student success (Forsyth et al., 2011). When parents and teachers trust each other, they were more likely to work together to support student's academic and social-emotional growth and raised expectations for them. These elements, including trust, efficacy, and expectations, created a school climate that improved student achievement (Hoy et al., 2006). Regular communication between teachers and parents also helped increase student engagement, parental involvement, and student motivation (Kraft & Dougherty, 2013).

Adolescents may face academic and behavioral difficulties and social problems when their needs were unmet in middle school (Garcia & Rios, 2014). Exposure to family chaos during a crisis could negatively impact students' mental well-being, highlighting the importance of early interventions to enhance parenting practices in high-risk families and students' emergency response skills (Wong et al., 2021). Involving families in school could turn it into a community-linked space, promoting learning and student motivation (Garcia & Rios, 2014). To increase

family engagement, school professionals should prioritize building partnerships, recognizing power differentials, and establishing trust with families (Chen et al., 2016).

Institutional Resilience

Institutions have a clear function in producing social, economic, and cultural benefits to meet the needs of society. However, they also served as moral communities that united different segments of society through shared objectives, values, and experiences, thereby contributing to social unity (Trubshaw, 2021). Institutional resilience is a term that typically refers to the changes in social institutions over time as they adapt to external factors. This broad concept emphasized the ability of institutions to absorb disturbances and reorganize them to function effectively (Martin & Sundley, 2015). However, when sudden shocks occur and a response was necessary, the focus of institutional resilience should shift toward the ability of institutions to maintain their operating capacities in the face of disturbance (Handmer & Dovers, 1996). Resilience involves a sequential process of activities carried out by individuals and systems in response to shocks (Dulak et al., 2022). Schools have had to navigate a complex set of health and safety protocols, manage limited resources, and address concerns about equity and access. These challenges have tested the institutional resilience of schools and highlighted the importance of proactive planning and preparation.

Institutional resilience refers to a school's ability to adapt and respond effectively to disruptive events, such as the pandemic, without compromising its core functions and values. It involved a range of strategies and practices, including contingency planning, risk management, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement. (Herrfahrdt-Pähle & Pahl-Wostl, 2012). Institutional resilience was critical in determining a school's ability to continue providing quality

education and student support. Effective institutional resilience enabled schools to maintain continuity of learning, safeguard the health and well-being of students and staff, and sustain their operations and reputation. Maintaining internal controllability within institutional systems ensured stability and reduces uncertainty (Herrfahrdt-Pähle & Pahl-Wostl, 2012). The ability of an entity to self-restore and bounce back relied on the flexibility of its organizational structures and administrative procedures, which allowed for maintaining equilibrium (Martin, 2018).

To promote institutional resilience, partnerships between schools, families, and communities offered comprehensive services that address nonacademic barriers to learning, such as health and mental health concerns, poverty, and family stress. Successful students were often developed due to strong partnerships between families and schools. These partnerships created a continuum of services that met children's developmental needs while also supporting families by connecting the family, school, and community. These partnerships were intentional and dynamic, with professionals working alongside children and families in both school and community settings.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic had presented immense challenges for educators, and although they have made valiant efforts to support students and families, lasting change was needed in the form of legal, policy, and cultural shifts to address the challenges they face (Supovitz, 2022). Schools played a critical role in promoting protective practices during the pandemic, and educators had an opportunity to gain insight into their students' social contexts (Khanal et al., 2021). As the pandemic shifted from acute to endemic, school administrators and counselors

must take action to address the widening educational disparities in academic achievement and social-emotional development (Kruczek et al., 2022).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the world to stop. The stay-at-Home Order in California forced school doors to close (California Department of Public Health, 2020). Teachers had to quickly learn how to teach in a remote environment, while students had to adjust to learning at home. Students learning at home became academically and emotionally difficult as isolation continued. Due to social distancing requirements and recommendations, students could not socialize with their friends and teachers in the ways they were accustomed to, leading to feelings of loneliness and impacting students' mental wellness.

Purpose

This study aimed to understand the Bishop John Paul Academy community's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and how protective and promotive factors fostered their resilience. The study used in-depth interviews to construct narratives of eight Bishop John Paul Academy community members' experiences during remote and hybrid instruction and the return to face-to-face instruction during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. The eight community members comprised four students, two teachers, one counselor, and one administrator. The eight Bishop John Paul Academy community members reflected on the promotive and protective factors that contributed to their resilience during the various challenges presented to them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Setting

The diocese, located in Southern California, was responsible for overseeing the education of more than 72,000 students. The diocese operates under the guidance and leadership of the

Archbishop and the Superintendent of Catholic Schools. The diocese was committed to providing high-quality, faith-based education to all students in its schools, ranging from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade. The curriculum was designed to integrate Catholic teachings and values into all aspects of the educational experience, with a focus on academic excellence, spiritual formation, and community service. The diocese was committed to creating a safe and welcoming environment for all students and families and works to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in its schools. By fostering a strong partnership between schools, families, and the broader Catholic community, the department strived to create a supportive and enriching educational experience for all students.

During the pandemic, schools have faced numerous challenges in providing education to students. To address these challenges, school districts have implemented various measures to support schools and ensure that students continue to receive a quality education. Compared to the neighboring school districts, the department supported schools during the pandemic by providing technology and resources for remote learning. As schools were forced to close their doors to prevent the spread of the virus, they provided students with iPads containing cellular ensuring they had access to reliable internet connections. In addition to hardware, they also provided software and online resources to support remote learning, including video conferencing platforms such as Zoom and Google Meets. This technology has allowed students to continue their education from home and has enabled teachers to deliver instruction and provide feedback in real-time.

The diocese was committed to creating a safe environment for all students and families. They played a critical role in implementing safety protocols for in-person instruction. As schools

began to reopen, they worked with public health officials to develop guidelines for social distancing, mask-wearing, and cleaning protocols. This involved a significant investment in personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer, as well as funding for cleaning equipment and COVID-19 testing kits.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health of students and staff, with many experiencing increased levels of stress and anxiety. In response, the diocese offered mental health services to students and staff. They provided additional support through counseling services and mental health resources. By fostering a strong partnership between schools, families, and the broader Catholic community, the department strived to create a supportive and enriching educational experience for all students.

Bishop John Paul Academy

Bishop John Paul Academy was a mid-size college preparatory Catholic high school with 436 students and 37 total faculty and staff members. 31% of the student population qualified for free and reduced lunch or identified as low-performing students. 74% of students receive need-based financial aid, and 93% of the student population were people of color: 61% Latinx, 11% multiracial, 10% Asian, 5% African American, 4% Filipino, and 2% Native American. In addition, 38% of the students are first-generation high school students.

Bishop John Paul Academy utilizes Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), federal grants allocated by the United States government, to improve the education quality of disadvantaged students. Title funds, which were created by the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, or *ESEA*, (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2023) and amended in the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, or *ESSA*,

(Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2023) are federal funds that are intended to supplement state funding for education, not to replace it. These funds are distributed annually by the federal government and are allocated by State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to individual schools and districts in a proportionate manner (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). *Title I* funding aids provided financial assistance to supports low-income and low-performing students' academic success (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). *Title I* funding also addressed food insecurity using the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The program provides free or reduced-price lunches to students from low-income families. *Title II* funding focused on enhancing teaching quality and professional development opportunities for educators (California Department of Education, 2022b). *Title III* funding intended to support and improve the English language proficiency and academic achievement of English Language Learners and help them meet the same challenging academic standards as their peers (California Department of Education, 2023b). *Title IV* funding was geared towards providing students with a well-rounded education by funding programs such as art, music, physical education, and technology (California Department of Education, 2022c). These grants offered enhanced educational opportunities for their students and strive towards educational equity for all students regardless of socioeconomic status.

During the pandemic, the government provided funding for schools to help them navigate the challenges presented by the pandemic. The *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* (California Department of Education, 2023a), allocated approximately \$800,000 in aid to Bishop John Paul Academy. Additional funding such as the *Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief*, or *ESSER*, Fund, (Office of Elementary and Secondary School, 2023),

and *Emergency Assistance for Non-Public Schools*, or *EANS*, (California Department of Education, 2022a), were used the funds to purchase technology for remote learning, provide support to students who were struggling with mental health issues, implementing health and safety measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and addressing learning loss due to school closures.

Bishop John Paul Academy strived to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students, including those with disabilities, students with 504 and Individualized Education Plans (IEP). By providing support for students with IEPs and 504 plans, Bishop John Paul Academy ensured that all students have the opportunity to succeed academically and reach their full potential. The Support Team Education Plan (STEP) coordinator and the team (student's teachers, Vice Principal of Curriculum, STEP Counselor, and student's parents) gather information and work together to support a student's educational needs in the classroom. The team used the data to create an action plan to identify the student's strengths and areas of concern, implement support strategies, identify responsible persons, and schedule timelines for progress. At Bishop John Paul Academy, working together with parents was a fundamental objective and principle. Parents' involvement was crucial in creating a constructive educational strategy for their children.

Culture

Bishop John Paul Academy's charism revolved around social justice, and its mission followed all Catholic schools to develop a whole student. By their senior year, students must demonstrate a deep understanding of "our world's" complex challenges through service projects that created positive change in their communities and beyond. The main social justice project the

school does as a whole was the March for Hunger. The school community walked 24 miles beginning in East Los Angeles and ending at the Santa Monica Pier. The purpose of the March for Hunger was to expose students to the stark contrast between the area's poorest neighborhoods and the most affluent. The project also raised money for the LA Catholic Worker, which served the homeless of Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles. Bishop John Paul Academy's March for Hunger makes up 90% of their donations a year.

Not only do they have to participate in the March for Hunger, but also accumulate 25 service project hours per year revolving around a different pillar of social justice each year. The four pillars Bishop John Paul Academy focused on were equity, access to resources, participation, and human rights. Each pillar was intertwined with their Religion classes, and leadership organization such as National Honor Society, California Scholastic Federation, Associated Student Body, Campus Ministry, and Ambassadors' Club. Through different service projects through research and community engagement, students learned about the challenges faced by marginalized communities and developed a sense of social responsibility and inspire them to take action to address issues of injustice in their communities.

Furthermore, the school was recognized for creating a familial atmosphere and its dedication to fostering both the academic and spiritual growth of its students. Social justice education was heavily influenced by the Religion courses. Through the exploration of diverse religious traditions, students gained an enhanced comprehension of the principles, convictions, and rituals that shaped a range of cultures and societies. The Religion curriculum emphasized the significance of showing empathy and respect towards individuals from varying backgrounds and faiths. The Religion educators prioritized the value of advocating for the underprivileged and

advocating for equity and impartiality. As a result, students developed a sense of social responsibility and a deeper understanding of the impact of social inequality.

The function of religion and faith was not restricted to their respective classes but extended to all aspects of the students' lives. The comprehensive faith-based approach guaranteed that students were exposed to college-preparatory academics, opportunities for extracurricular activities, spiritual development, and a lifelong support system. Teachers promoted positive relationships and teamwork skills by encouraging collaboration on projects and activities. They also served as positive role models by demonstrating kindness, empathy, and respect to create a classroom culture that supported social and emotional learning. The school administration advocated for teachers to establish strong relationships with students by displaying interest in their lives, actively listening, and providing emotional support when necessary. By fostering a sense of community, students, teachers, and staff could build positive relationships, feel supported, and experience a sense of belonging, resulting in a more positive school environment and better academic outcomes for students.

Research Questions

Two questions guided this qualitative research:

1. First, what were the experiences of the Bishop John Paul Academy community during the COVID-19 pandemic, including remote learning, hybrid learning, and the return to campus?
2. What promotive and protective factors fostered resilience among the Bishop John Paul Academy community during the pandemic?

The Rationale for the Qualitative Approach

Phenomenological Study

To conduct a phenomenological study in a dissertation, the motivation may arise from a desire to acquire a profound comprehension of the subjective experiences of individuals, including how they perceive, interpret, and make sense of their lived experiences.

Phenomenology is a qualitative approach that prioritizes studying people's experiences, as human behavior is influenced by such experiences rather than an objective and physically described reality external to the individual (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Phenomenologists were particularly interested in exploring social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of the people involved, according to Cypress (2011). By concentrating on how individuals perceive, interpret, and make sense of their experiences, phenomenology attempted to uncover the underlying meaning. Thus, phenomenology was appropriate for investigating subjective phenomena such as identity, consciousness, and experiences, as it sought to describe and interpret the meaning and meaning-making processes of lived experiences (Converse, 2012).

Phenomenological research had the potential to provide valuable insights into the experiences of various stakeholders in the educational system, such as students, teachers, and administrators. The educational context was complex and cannot be fully understood through observational data alone, but phenomenology could shed light on the subjective experiences of individuals and their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and values. This could help researchers gain a more comprehensive understanding of how these experiences influence their perspectives and behaviors within the educational context. However, it could be challenging to gain a clear understanding of the experiences of educators and students due to various factors (Becker, 2022).

Phenomenology's focused on uncovering and describing the essence of human experiences also made it a valuable tool for studying the use of technology in teaching and learning. By studying experiences with technology, phenomenology could expand existing research and create new areas of inquiry in educational technology (Cilesiz, 2011).

In addition, a phenomenological study could provide useful information for educational policy, practice, and future research. The results could be used to create more effective teaching strategies, enhance the student learning experience, and better understand the obstacles and opportunities within the educational system. In this particular study, a phenomenological approach was utilized to explore the experiences of students, teachers, and administrators during the COVID-19 pandemic (Leavy, 2017; Saldana & Omasta, 2018). By conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher aimed to uncover participants' experiences and reflections on the challenges they encountered during three phases of schooling during the pandemic: remote instruction, hybrid instruction, and return to campus. The interview data was presented in chronological order, with important themes highlighted for each phase of the pandemic. The theoretical framework of resilience was then employed to analyze the interview data, identifying protective and promotive factors that emerged in the participants' experiences. The findings were organized thematically, emphasizing the factors that were shared among multiple participants.

Method

Choosing the Participants

After receiving approval from Loyola Marymount University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I initiated the process of searching for participants for my research. As my study was focused on phenomenology, the selection of interviewees was a critical aspect to delve

deeper into the experiences, views, and knowledge of people who underwent education during the pandemic. Therefore, it was essential to include teachers, students, and administrators in the interview process as they could provide valuable insights into their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To begin the interview process, I obtained permission from the school. Once I received approval, I identified potential interviewees, including 18-year-old students, teachers, staff, and administrators. To reach out to them, I sent emails to all faculty, staff, administration (Appendix A), and 18-year-old students (Appendix B), which included details about the research project and how they could contact me if they were interested. After waiting for a week to receive responses, I received interest from six students, two teachers, one counselor, and one administrator. I contacted all interested participants via phone to schedule a Zoom interview and sent them an email with the consent form. Only eight out of the ten interested participants completed the Zoom interview.

Participants

Eight participants were four past Bishop John Paul Academy students, one past teacher, one current teacher, counselor, and administrator who experienced remote and hybrid learning and the return to face-to-face instruction at the school. The past students were 18-year-old seniors who graduated in 2022.

Procedures

Interviews

An interview was conducted with current and past students, teachers, counselors, and administrators. The 30- to 45-minute interviews were conducted over Zoom. The Zoom

interviews were recorded and transcribed with the subject's parental consent. The initial questions (Appendix C) reflected their pre-pandemic lives in the classroom, both academically and socially. These initial questions build rapport and create a safe space for the student or teacher to speak. The following questions described their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview finished with questions about their promotive and protective factors and how their resilience coped with the challenges of the pandemic. After recording the Zoom, I exported the audio file into a transcription program called Otter.ai (otter.ai, 7/5/2022).

Analytical Plan

Inductive Coding

After editing the transcription to match the oral statements using the program otter.ai, I began the inductive coding process. Inductive coding is a qualitative research method that analyzes data by identifying patterns, themes, and concepts. This coding approach is based on the data rather than on preconceived ideas or theories to guide the analysis. I examined the data for commonalities, differences, frequencies, and causal patterns and used these to develop categories and themes. A few of the commonalities found were student and teacher support, challenges of isolation, causes of stress and anxiety, and challenges of learning and instruction. I refined and revised the codes, collapsing similar ones into broader themes or breaking down complex themes into more specific sub-codes. These sub-codes were teacher and student support, school community challenges, and promotive and protective factors. These sub-codes were then analyzed through an analytic memo to understand further the main themes that emerged from the data.

Analytic Memo

To record, analyze, and interpret the data from the eight interviews, I utilized analytic memos. These memos enabled me to identify and highlight key themes, patterns, or insights that emerged from the data. They also allowed me to organize my thoughts and ideas based on the interview data. Additionally, I used Google Sheets to document insights into the research questions and guide further analysis.

Limitations

Sample

A small qualitative sample size cannot adequately generalize all high school students and teachers' experiences during remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. All participants' experiences were from a single school. The sample of students, teachers, or staff that is available at a specific school site may not be representative of the larger population, which can limit the generalizability of the findings.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods such as surveys, interviews, and observations may not be able to capture all the aspects of the school site's experiences during the pandemic. The scope of research may be limited to a specific aspect or subject of the school site's experiences during the pandemic, which can make it difficult to gather a comprehensive data set. The experiences during the pandemic are relatively recent, and thus memories of those events may be affected by recency bias, which can limit the accuracy of the data collected. The researcher may be subject to bias in their observations and data collection due to the location and participants of the study, which can limit the validity and reliability of the findings.

Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure honest and accurate responses, several steps were taken. First, the anonymity of participants will be protected. Names will not be placed on any list or other communication related to the study. Second, participants will be instructed to keep their participants confidential among their peers. Third, each participant will be interviewed on a different day and at other times when students are absent. Finally, after the respondents receive a guarantee of privacy regarding their responses, it will be assumed that participants will respond honestly to interview guide questions, and the data collected will be from a representative sample.

Delimitations

Subjects Chosen

The subjects that were chosen all went through remote, hybrid, and the return to face-to-face instruction at Bishop John Paul Academy. There was also an assumption that the participants had protective or promotive factors contributing to their resilience during the pandemic.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The COVID-19 pandemic caused fear and anxiety around the world. As infection rates and deaths increased, countries closed their cities using various lockdown guidelines. In California, families followed a stay-at-home order. As a result, workers were working at home, students were learning remotely, and front-line workers continued to supply citizens with food, medical help, and other necessary needs.

Remote learning involves using technology such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones to access educational materials and remotely communicate with teachers and classmates. Remote learning can take many forms, including live-streaming classes, pre-recorded lectures, and virtual assignments and assessments. The shift to remote learning has been challenging for many educators and students, but schools like Bishop John Paul Academy adapted to their school community's needs.

Once the local government agency deemed it safe to return to school with limitations, schools shifted to hybrid learning. Hybrid learning combines both in-person and remote instruction. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools implemented hybrid learning models to reopen safely while adhering to social distancing guidelines. This approach allowed students to attend classes in person on a rotating schedule while also participating in online or remote instruction on the days they were not in the classroom. Hybrid learning provided a balance of in-person and remote instruction to keep students and staff safe while allowing face-to-face interaction and support.

In August 2022, school doors were allowed to open to all students with various guidelines. It was a gradual process that involved reopening schools while ensuring the safety of students, staff, and faculty. This included social distancing, wearing masks, increased cleaning and sanitation, and testing and/or contact tracing. The return to face-to-face instruction was a complex process involving coordinating many stakeholders, including public health officials, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students, to ensure all guidelines were followed.

Education during the pandemic was not easy for Bishop John Paul Academy. The shifts to remote and hybrid learning forced the school community to adjust rapidly to continue learning. In addition, the challenges of academic motivation, teacher instruction, the lack of control, socio-emotional development, and local government guidelines were a few obstacles Bishop John Paul Academy faced during the pandemic. Yet, even though the school community faced various challenges, their resilience kept them together during the pandemic.

This study aimed to understand the Bishop John Paul Academy community's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and how protective and promotive factors fostered their resilience. Using a qualitative method, the study gathered and analyzed data using the critical narratives of eight Bishop John Paul Academy community members' experiences during remote and hybrid instruction and the return to face-to-face instruction during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. The eight community members comprised four students, two teachers, one counselor, and one administrator. In addition, the eight Bishop John Paul Academy community members reflected on the promotive and protective factors that contributed to their resilience during the various challenges presented to them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following sections present critical narratives from participants to respond to two research questions:

1. First, what were the experiences of the Bishop John Paul Academy community during the COVID-19 pandemic, including remote learning, hybrid learning, and the return to campus?
2. What promotive and protective factors fostered resilience among the Bishop John Paul Academy community during the pandemic?

Experiencing the Pandemic

In March 2020 impacted classroom instruction for teachers and students nationwide. Due to COVID-19, schools were closed down to prioritize the health and safety of employees, students, and their families. As a result, teachers were teaching through computer screens, and students were working independently. But, even though there was instruction, it did not compare to in-classroom instruction.

Brom (2020) characterized remote learning as an unprecedented “undertaking” that placed a heavy burden on schools, students, and families. There was a need for more preparation time for student learning. Teachers and students had to adapt to remote learning quickly. In a traditional classroom setting, teachers have the ability to discover tools for evaluating students’ progress. However, the pandemic limited teachers’ capacity to establish relationships, demonstrate care, and establish trust, which were all critical in setting cultural norms in the classroom. Children with strong emotional and social skills generally perform better academically, have healthier relationships with adults and peers, and have better mental health (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Students required more resources to supplement their learning needs during the pandemic. Although remote learning was implemented in 90% of countries worldwide, one in three K-12 students lacked access to the necessary devices (Reuge et al., 2021). Access to digital learning, isolation from teachers and peers, social distancing, a supportive home environment, and stable information technology infrastructures all played a role in students' motivation and academic performance during the pandemic (Balayar & Langlais, 2021). The transition to remote learning presented challenges for students, hindering both their ability and willingness to be productive (Bolumole, 2020). Research indicates that many students who quickly shifted to online learning experienced demotivation, social isolation, and displacement (Hall & Batty, 2020; Yamin, 2020).

When preparing for remote learning, teacher and student support were priorities. Teachers were partnered up with a "tech buddy." Teachers with technology strengths are partnered with their colleagues who struggle with technology. Whenever the teacher is interested in trying a new app or needs troubleshooting, their "tech buddy" is there for support. During remote learning, the administration would perform mental health and professional check-ins. Every other week, the administration would Zoom with the teachers to check on their mental health and if there were any problems with their students. Most of the issues were attendance and lack of effort in completing their assignments. The administration would assist the teachers with calling parents asking why their child is not logging on to Zoom or what kind of support the school needs to provide for their child's success.

The students faced various challenges and shared their opposing experiences during remote learning, such as workload adjustment issues, lack of creativity, insufficient feedback and

communication, difficulty staying motivated, and interruptions in their learning. The school administration emphasized the importance of continuous communication among teachers, students, and parents through Zoom or email. Self-pacing, self-regulated learning, and engagement in a remote learning environment were typically difficult for students. Therefore, students were encouraged to independently activate time management and organizational skills and complete their work by the assignment's due dates without procrastination. Additionally, teachers provided office hours for students, and many of them voluntarily helped students beyond their contractual hours.

Regrettably, the COVID-19 pandemic has disturbed the sense of connection among students due to the asynchronous, socially isolated, and distributed nature of online learning (Lowenthal & Dennen, 2017). Consequently, students had few chances to engage in regular synchronous social interactions with their teachers and peers. The scarcity of interaction opportunities may decrease social presence (Cavioni et al., 2020) and result in remote students feeling unmotivated, unappreciated, and unrecognized (Plante & Asselin, 2014). Therefore, the Associated Student Body (ASB), Christian Leadership, and the National Honor Society (NHS) were creating virtual activities such as a Bob Ross Night (painting), Zoom-in movie nights, YouTube videos, and interactive social media activities to build a social environment in a remote setting.

To monitor the mental health of their students, many teachers implemented social-emotional learning approaches in their teaching. Social-emotional learning refers to the skills and attitudes that foster self-awareness and the ability to manage one's own behavior and emotions, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Brackett & Dineen, 2020).

Students who possess these skills can better manage their emotions and behaviors, form positive relationships, and participate happily in group activities (Ball et al., 2021). Studies have shown that above-average social-emotional skills are linked to increased academic success (Jones et al., 2015), positive attitudes toward school, and improved engagement with teachers and classmates (Engle et al., 2010). Moreover, the support and empathy provided by the school community increased the resilience of teachers and students during remote learning.

Students were able to return in March 2021 in a hybrid instructional format. Hybrid combines traditional instruction with digital learning. It combines physical and virtual learning, allowing students to learn from physical and online environments. The students were given a choice to return to school or continue remote learning. Students were placed in cohorts based on their address due to local government guidelines. Each cohort would attend classes on certain days. During hybrid learning, teachers were instructing both in-person and remote students simultaneously. As a result, teachers needed help balancing communicating with the students on Zoom while communicating with in-person students. In addition, teachers had to find ways to deliver information while creating interactive activities with remote and in-person students.

During hybrid learning, the school community had to follow the guidelines from the local government agency. For example, social distancing in classrooms, hallways, and lunch areas wearing masks on campus, classroom doors and windows open, and teachers and students disinfecting their classrooms every period. The administration and teachers enforced the guidelines to keep the school open and prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Between implementing the guidelines, COVID testing, and contact tracing, the administrators added

responsibilities derailed them from their usual duties. The overwhelming workload for administrators and teachers caused increased stress and new challenges.

In August 2021, the doors were open as all students were back on campus, but similarly to hybrid learning, the school community had to follow local government agency guidelines. The school community had feelings of both excitement and nervousness. Teachers did not have to worry about teaching two different sets of students but needed to realize the residual effects of remote learning. Teachers and students had a challenge of a full schedule of seven periods. On the other hand, teachers and students were used to a minimized schedule and independent work.

The workload increased stress within the school community. It was evident that social isolation affected the students' social development. Students had difficulty interacting with each other, and some students expressed anxiety about being in a room with multiple people. Teachers focused on classroom management because students had difficulty adjusting to a classroom environment.

Profile Participants

Lily

Lily was an 18-year-old senior and a first-generation Filipino high school student. Lily stated that she “loved being involved with like ASB and like, all the school activities, and then like going out with my friends and like, my family. She was a highly social individual and held multiple positions in various leadership organizations on campus. In addition, she was heavily involved in the school's visual performance programs, especially in the school's choir and drama departments. Her art projects and posters displayed her artistic talent all over campus.

Academically, she was in the top ten percent of her class. However, as her grades reflected her

success, they did not reflect the balancing act she had to perform to maintain her high grades and school activities. Lily discussed, “Outside school, I like to socialize with my family and friends. I also like to travel.”

Once the pandemic began, her world was flipped upside down. As a highly social person, it was difficult for her to only be around her family. Lily mentioned, “phone calls, texting, and FaceTime did not substitute for face-to-face interaction.” As the local government orders kept families at home, Lily felt lonely and lost hope. Academically, she did not have a problem as her workload decreased compared to before the pandemic. However, as a performer, Lily missed singing in her school choir and performing with her friends from drama. Lily recollected, “I was still in musical theater, which I had done since like, the fourth grade, and then the pandemic hit, and then I stopped doing theater completely. She felt it was not the same on the computer screen.

Rose

Rose was an 18-year-old White student with a 504 plan. In third grade, she was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Rose said she “advocated for me and for the things that I needed. And so that really helped me be productive in school.” She was a member of multiple leadership organizations, and the administration and teachers valued her opinions. Rose was a member of the school band and the percussion section leader. Outside of school, she was involved in the Boy Scouts of America. She completed her Eagle projects in her senior year and earned her status.

When the pandemic began, Rose struggled with the guidelines the local government agency provided. Rose stated, “the isolation led to the spending majority of my day in bed sleeping. Rose explained that “social interaction was really difficult, without face-to-face

socialization in my life, I became lonely and sad.” The extracurricular activities that kept her busy were different through a computer screen. For band practice, it was tough trying to listen to each other through the computer while battling different internet strengths. Although, remote learning benefited her in completing her assignments. Rose explained, “I found that I was able to be productive for longer periods of time.” The extra time and independent work aided her in creating a system that worked for her.

Mona

Mona was an 18-year-old Latinx student who faced several challenges as a child. Mona was a foster child who moved from family to family until her uncle adopted her. She said, “I was a very cautious individual who built a wall when speaking to others.” As a freshman, she took a risk and joined the volleyball team and the associated student body, ASB, to assimilate into the high school’s culture. Academically, she was a strong student who put everything into her projects and assignments. Her creativity improved the vision of the student-ran YouTube channel.

She recalled the announcement of the school year being postponed due to the pandemic. Mona thought it was a two-week vacation, but it turned into months. She said, “I was so excited. I was like, I’m going to go home for two weeks!” During this time, Mona felt lonely and wanted to sleep throughout the day. She was used to socialization before the pandemic. Mona explained, “I was upset because I missed the rest of my year. The isolation reminded me of my time in the foster home.” When the school year began her junior year, she found creative ways to continue the school community through Zoom activities and YouTube. She reflected, “I felt this was my purpose as junior class president.”

Ryan

Ryan was an 18-year-old Latinx senior. He was an honor roll and highly involved student who participated in athletics, clubs, and leadership organizations. Before the pandemic, he focused primarily on baseball. Ryan stated, “Baseball motivated me to succeed academically to achieve a college scholarship.” As a student ambassador, Ryan would attend high school fairs for Catholic elementary schools and visit junior high classrooms. His positive attitude and advocacy for the school would help recruit junior high students to attend Bishop John Paul Academy.

Ryan remembered when the school closed down due to the pandemic. He recalled, “I was warming up for the baseball game and saw the umpire talk to the baseball coaches. After the meeting, the head coach called the players and his staff and told them the game was canceled due to COVID-19 guidelines.” At that time, he thought the baseball season was delayed, but it would eventually become canceled. The cancellation of the baseball season challenged his motivation to succeed in the classroom. Ryan said, “I just did my work and did what needed to be done. I didn't really learn as much as I should have. I just learned the basics of something.”

David

David was a 26-year-old Latinx world language teacher at the high school. The year the pandemic began, he was in his third year of teaching. As an American sign language teacher, his lessons were very hands-on and interactive. He described his teaching methods as “having students be interactive. I know I had to build relationships with my students to ensure engagement and trust in my lessons.” Outside of teaching, he also drove for Uber. He mentioned, “the extra money helped me take care of my family.”

When the pandemic began, David thought he received a much-needed two-week break he needed. He reflected, “I have two weeks off. It’s just unheard of. Although I was curious as to what was going to happen.” He was also nervous to see what remote learning would entail. Not only did the pandemic affect his daily job, but his side job as well. Due to the pandemic and local government guidelines, David said, “Uber rides were limited or non-existent.” However, during the pandemic, he explained, “I did look at the positives in the ability to spend time with my family and the blessings of the excellent health of my family.”

Ronald

Ronald was a 62-year-old White social studies teacher at the high school for over 30 years. He stated, “I have seen and lived through various historical events while teaching and adapted to several educational changes.” Over the years, he has built relationships with his students and their parents. Ronald said, “they still ask for financial advice and thank me for preparing them for life after high school.” Before the pandemic, Ronald would fly to his family in New York every holiday break. He mentioned, “my New York trips were used as a form of self-care.”

When the pandemic began, Ronald said, “I was worried about the foreseeable future. As a government and economics teacher, I discussed the political and financial climate around the world.” He was also concerned that “I was in the age group to which COVID-19 was most detrimental.” Finally, Ronald also mentioned, “I was worried about how I would teach students as the two-week loss set me behind for advanced placement tests.”

Helena

Helena was a 60-year-old woman of middle Eastern descent. She had been in education for over 30 years. She started as an elementary school teacher, then moved on to high school as a teacher, and is currently an academic counselor. As a counselor, she develops a plan for each student throughout their four years at the high school. Each plan is geared to send a student to a four-year college after graduation. Depending on their grades throughout their four years, their classes and plans were adjusted for each student's success and life after graduation. Helena stated, "I have built relationships with all students and their families. I workday in and day out to ensure all students are seen and cared for."

Helena managed college preparedness, academic conflicts, and social, emotional, and relationship issues. Lily described Helena as the mother on campus that students would go to talk to." When schools were shut down, Helena said, "I developed a plan to continue to meet with students and families during the two-week hiatus. Students were scheduling their classes for the following school year at that time." She also mentioned, "I would also continue communicating with students who were struggling socially and emotionally."

Howard

Howard was a 55-year-old African American with 30-plus years of service. He began as a teacher and coach at his alma mater. He then decided to leave for a head coaching opportunity and the role of dean of students at a different Catholic high school. Howard then left the school for a public school head coaching position. After a few years, he left the public sector. He returned to Catholic education at Bishop John Paul Academy as an assistant coach and dean of students and, a few years later, was promoted to assistant principal.

Before the pandemic, Howard said, “I focused on changing the high school’s discipline culture.” He wanted to ensure that he fulfilled all his responsibilities as assistant principal and dean of students. Howard saw good in all students, unlike a disciplinary dean. As a dean, he reflected, “I built relationships with my students to earn their trust, you know, even though they were in trouble. I believed in conversation rather than confrontation, which eased tensions or nervousness during critical conversations.” Once the school doors closed, there were constant meetings with the leadership team to create a smooth transition to remote learning and predict potential disciplinary issues. Howard stated, “having successes of getting through to certain students to achieve better outcomes would improve a smooth transition to remote learning.”

Table 1
Participant Profiles

Names	Gender	Age	Race	Title
Lily	Female	18	Filipino	Student
Rose	Female	18	White	Student
Mona	Female	18	Latinx	Student
Ryan	Male	18	Latinx	Student
David	Male	26	Latinx	Teacher
Ronald	Male	62	White	Teacher
Helena	Female	60	Middle Eastern	Counselor
Howard	Female	55	African American	Administrator

REMOTE LEARNING

I think for most teachers across the country, it was uncharted territory. We didn't know what we were getting into. We did the best we could. Ronald

Remote learning has presented unique challenges for teachers and students, requiring a shift in traditional teaching and learning methods. Teachers face difficulties engaging students, maintaining discipline, and adapting to new technology. When David found out the remainder of the school year was remote, he said that “it changed for sure, and I had to be confident that I would still do my best to imitate my impact on students in the classroom via zoom and then further utilize it to the maximum potential.” Unfortunately, there were faculty members who were not as technologically advanced as some of the teachers. Ronald was in “more of a mental strain than anything else because I built up my lack of ability so much that I worried that I would be able to even perform to a bare minimum level.” Where faculty members like Helena “[were] concerned about some of the adjustments I had to make professionally if I could keep up with the

technology.” Helena also understood Ronald as she “saw that being older and some of my friends dealing with that, and all insecurity comes with that.”

The Teachers’ and Students’ Challenges

Teachers were challenged to find ways to engage students in a virtual environment and ensure that all students had the same learning opportunities. Ronald reflected on “having freshmen and trying to engage them.” He described how “being a freshman in high school, it’s difficult enough, and subtracting these years where they do need to be in just to socialize was undoubtedly a challenge.” According to David, “when they were not physically present in the classroom, I had a harder time providing individualized instruction, making it difficult to meet the needs of all students.”

Teachers had a more challenging time monitoring student engagement when they were not physically present. According to Howard, this made it difficult to maintain student motivation and interest in the material. Howard mentioned, “instructing online was a little bit of an adjustment to try to make, you know. Not knowing whether you’re actually reaching the kids behind the screen, the darkness of their cameras, or their ceiling fans or lights on the ceiling.”

Teachers like Ronald had a difficult time assessing student understanding when they are not physically present in the classroom. Ronald said, “it was hard to gauge how much they struggled because we all know that on a homework assignment, they can easily copy, or on a quiz, it could be manipulated and copied. It wasn’t the same.” Howard, as a disciplinary dean, had a challenge maintaining a sense of community and connection among students when they are not physically present. Howard explained that “not being able to pull a kid aside to speak to them to find out what’s going on was a challenge.”

On the other hand, students struggled with distractions, lacked of motivation and creating a suitable study environment. The transition to remote learning had significantly impacted students' engagement and motivation. Lily said, "I needed help to focus, like being on Zoom. And then, being at home, there's a lot of distractions, like, a lot of the time I was on my phone." With the lack of control, students find it hard to stay focused and motivated while learning from home. Ryan explained how "having all my classes on one tiny computer gets hard. The distractions make it harder." Technical difficulties, such as internet connectivity issues or software glitches, can disrupt online classes and make it difficult for students like Rose to participate. Rose reflected, "I was in a band, and it was so difficult just because you can't play as an ensemble. When there's lag, the timing is all messed up."

Lack of Socialization

The shift to remote learning due to the pandemic had posed many challenges, particularly for students who need more social interaction typically found in a classroom setting. According to Helena, "students' parents were worried about their kids having limited opportunities to interact and collaborate with their peers during remote learning." Helena also explained, "parents were worried about their kids' anxiety. It seemed like they became more and more aware of it as time went on. I don't think I had a sense of how bad it was affecting everyone."

Remote learning can be isolating and difficult to manage, leading to feelings of loneliness, boredom, and disconnection from peers, as mentioned by Lily, Mona, and Ryan. Lily, "didn't feel like I wasn't able to socialize as much. Which I, like, thrive off of, like, social interaction. So if anything, it made me feel a lot, like a lot more lonely." Mona "felt alone. So I didn't really have anyone who was there to help me." According to Mona's and Ryan's

experience, the lack of social interaction in the classroom could directly impact student engagement and performance. Mona “had low energy in doing things. I would just wake up and go on Zoom, but I would just be on my bed.” Ryan was “hoping that the cases for COVID would go down so that we would be allowed on campus, and I would be able to see my friends. Being at home, I didn't talk to anyone. It's not very fun.”

The sudden transition to a remote learning environment had left students feeling disconnected, overwhelmed, and without the resources, they needed to succeed. Students needed more than merely understanding the material, they needed support. Without it, they struggled to stay motivated and engaged in their studies, and their academic progress will suffer. According to the data, teachers ensured that the students received the necessary support for a successful learning experience. David highlighted how he “opened up the conversation and dialogue” with his students to create a supportive environment and, as a result, “learned more about the mental health aspect of the pandemic.” He was one of many in his efforts to connect with and support students.

Office Hours

Howard believed “office hours allowed teachers and students to connect, ask questions, and get help with assignments.” Ronald highlighted that “they created a supportive environment where students feel comfortable asking questions and sharing their concerns.” Helena added that “teachers encouraged their students to take the initiative by setting specific goals for each office hour session and providing resources to help them achieve those goals.” Multiple participants recounted how they communicated regularly with other school community members through email and office hours. Lily stated that “the office hours helped me build a connection with the

teacher. Like at school, it's helped me grow closer to some of the teachers and helped me with what I was learning.” Helena said that “teachers communicated when and how they would be available for help to ensure that students take advantage of office hours during remote learning.” Ronald believed “he created a safe space where students can easily ask questions and receive feedback remotely.” Rose mentions, “I could just email my teachers all the time, which made me a lot more comfortable with emailing people.”

Technology Teams

As the world increasingly relied on remote learning. It is important to ensure teachers had access to the necessary support and resources. According to David, “technology teams have been tasked with technical support during the shift to remote learning.” Bishop John Paul Academy’s tech teams provided technical support to students, teachers, and staff experiencing technical difficulties with their devices, software, or internet connectivity. Helena mentioned that she was technologically challenged and believed that her “tech buddy was a big help.” She also believed that “it brought our community together, to say. I think the most important thing is to show that no one needs to feel embarrassed, but some were a little bit empowering. Knowing that whatever we learned as educators, we know that we’re not gonna throw this away later. We can use this somehow.”

David remembers that the “tech teams provided training and support to teachers and students on using remote learning tools and technology, such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and educational applications, to ensure that they could effectively participate in remote learning.” Howard believed that “the tech buddies were extremely helpful, learning how to navigate Google Classroom, and all the other apps we use, you know, those were all extremely helpful.”

“The professional development that the administration provided had really helped me set myself up for success,” according to David. Ronald thought, “the administration developed strategies to ensure that students and faculty members have access to the necessary tools and resources for successful remote learning.”

Teacher Check-ins

To ensure that teachers are meeting their goals and providing quality instruction, it is important to have strategies to support administration teacher check-ins during remote learning. Ronald said, “it was definitely helpful to you knowing the administration was listening to what we were experiencing with the students in the classroom.” Helena believed, “this can involve utilizing technology tools, creating structure, setting clear expectations, and encouraging collaboration between administrators and teachers.” Howard mentioned that “administrators must provide their staff with the support, you know, while maintaining a positive remote learning environment.” The teacher check-ins also aid in communicating with students of concern due to grades or attendance. The most frustrating thing to Howard was “not knowing what their situations were and just trying to get them to show up to their online classes.” In addition, Robert mentioned that “the administrators helped the teachers communicate with the parents of the concerned students.”

Additionally, many resources, such as mental health services, were available for students struggling with distance learning. Helena emphasized, “with the right support, remote learning can be a successful experience for all involved.” Ronald believed that “the support and resources helped students stay connected with their peers and teachers while providing them with the tools they need to succeed in their studies.” Helena highlighted that “remote learning has several

potential impacts on students' social and emotional health, from reduced face-to-face interaction with peers to increased screen time.” David stated, “I provided students with opportunities for collaboration, used technology to facilitate conversations and activities, encouraged self-reflection, modeled positive behaviors, and created an emotionally supportive environment.” Helena mentioned how the “teachers provided students with a sense of community, fostered meaningful relationships and offered support systems that helped them manage their emotions. Rose “really, really appreciated being at Bishop John Paul Academy. And like, having teachers email and like having teachers, like asking if I needed to be checked up on.”

Table 2
Experiences During Remote Learning

Names	Challenges	Support
Lily	<p>I needed help to focus, like being on Zoom. And then, being at home, there's a lot of distractions, like, a lot of the time I was on my phone.</p> <p>I didn't feel like I wasn't able to socialize as much. Which I, like, thrive off of, like, social interaction. So if anything, it made me feel a lot, like a lot more lonely.</p>	<p>The office hours helped me build a connection with the teacher. Like at school, it's helped me grow closer to some of the teachers and helped me with what I was learning.</p>
Rose	<p>I was in a band, and it was so difficult just because you can't play as an ensemble. When there's lag, the timing is all messed up.</p>	<p>I really, really appreciated being at Bishop John Paul Academy. And like, having teachers email and like having teachers, like asking if I needed to be checked up on.</p>
Mona	<p>I had low energy in doing things. I would just wake up and go on Zoom, but I would just be on my bed.</p> <p>I felt alone. So, I didn't really have anyone who was there to help me.</p>	
Ryan	<p>Having all my classes on one tiny computer gets hard. The distractions make it harder.</p>	
David	<p>When they are not physically present in the classroom, I had a harder time providing individualized instruction, making it difficult to meet the needs of all students.</p>	<p>Tech teams provided training and support to teachers and students on using remote learning tools and technology, such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and educational applications, to ensure that they could effectively participate in remote learning.</p> <p>The professional development that the administration provided had really helped me set myself up for success.</p>
Ronald	<p>It was more of a mental strain than anything else because I built up my lack of ability so much that I worried that I would be able to even perform to a bare minimum level.</p>	<p>They (office hours) created a supportive environment where students feel comfortable asking questions and sharing their concerns.</p> <p>It was definitely helpful to you knowing the administration was listening to what we were experiencing with the students in the classroom.</p>

Table 2 (continued)

Experiences During Remote Learning

Names	Challenges	Support
Helena	<p>I was concerned about some of the adjustments I had to make professionally if I could keep up with the technology.</p> <p>Parents were worried about their kids' anxiety. It seemed like they became more and more aware of it as time went on. I don't think I had a sense of how bad it was affecting everyone.</p>	<p>Teachers encouraged their students to take the initiative by setting specific goals for each office hour session and providing resources to help them achieve those goals.</p> <p>Tech teams brought our community together, to say. I think the most important thing is to show that no one needs to feel embarrassed, but some were a little bit empowering. Knowing that whatever we learned as educators, we know that we're not gonna throw this away later. We can use this somehow</p>
Howard	<p>Instructing online was a little bit of an adjustment to try to make, you know. Not knowing whether you're actually reaching the kids behind the screen, the darkness of their cameras, or their ceiling fans or lights on the ceiling.</p>	<p>Office hours allowed teachers and students to connect, ask questions, and get help with assignments.</p> <p>The tech buddies were extremely helpful, learning how to navigate Google Classroom, and all the other apps we use, you know, those were all extremely helpful.</p>

Hybrid Learning

Nothing like everybody being back on campus again because they have their teacher's attention.

There was still this looming sense that we were back to social activity. It shows you how much school is much more than what's in the classroom. Helena

Hybrid learning had allowed schools to continue providing instruction to students, even when in-person learning was impossible due to high levels of COVID-19 transmission. Hybrid learning enabled students to take advantage of online education's flexibility and convenience while still benefiting from the social interaction, support, and structure of in-person classes.

Mona “liked the face-to-face classes. It really created like that connection of paying attention

because when I have a screen in front of me, I get distracted.” Lily, like Mona, said, “we were paying more attention. Like we didn't have the distraction as if we were at home.”

David believed that “hybrid learning allowed for a greater variety of teaching methods, allowing me to use different approaches to meet my student's needs better. Helena believed that “it increased opportunities for students to collaborate with their peers and teachers, which can be beneficial for building social-emotional skills and enhancing student engagement, motivation, and academic performance.” Rose took the opportunity to “come on campus because I was getting depressed, being alone in my room. I just wasn't feeling the best because I wasn't around people my age, and I wasn't able to like talk to people.”

Local Government Agency COVID-19 Guidelines

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a unique set of challenges for the school, particularly when implementing county COVID guidelines during hybrid learning. Hybrid learning involved the combination of online and in-person instruction and required schools to adhere to safety protocols such as social distancing, wearing masks, and frequent sanitizing. According to Howard, “the main challenge of implementing county COVID guidelines during hybrid learning was ensuring that all students, parents, staff members, and visitors are, you know, aware of the rules and following them consistently.” Schools must also ensure that they had enough resources to keep up with the ever-changing regulations from local governments to maintain a safe environment for everyone involved. Howard explained how “the county guidelines kept changing every week, and sometimes every few days, you know. You know, it was a challenge to keep up and enforce students to social distance and keep their masks on.”

Due to the impact of local government COVID guidelines of limited classroom space, social distancing requirements, and other safety protocols that must be followed to ensure the health and safety of students and faculty members, it limited the number of students allowed on campus. Howard said, “I am shocked and disappointed that there weren’t as many students on campus as we wanted. We had the opportunity to be on campus, but folks chose not to be on campus.”

Hybrid Instruction

According to Ronald, “the main challenges of instruction during hybrid learning included providing adequate support for students and developing effective instructional strategies for the online portion of the course.” David discussed “having to balance and making sure they’re on the same page was challenging. Not having students in the classroom finish first and just wait around for the next step waiting for the kids in the virtual room to catch up, having a balance, and not making them feel bored.” Ronald added that “students had a challenge of staying organized and maintaining focus and engagement, while I had to manage time and instructions between online and in-person classes.” Howard had to “adjust his teaching style and deal with potential technical issues.” The mask mandate affected David “because of my subject matter, having a mask did affect my performance and the students’ performance a little bit because it is a visual language. I didn’t need to have my facial expressions enhanced by having a mask on, and I felt students had more questions about the facial expressions, which led me to learn how to be more verbal and increase my communication skills to convey what I am showing on the face. It takes much longer.”

Data showed that with some students attending in person and others participating remotely, it took a lot of work for teachers to facilitate interaction and collaboration between all students. David “had to coordinate different assignments and activities for students participating remotely and those attending in person, which could be time-consuming and challenging to manage.” Ronald had the same experience. He recalled, “I would move out of range, and then almost as an afterthought, I’d say, wait a minute, I’ve got one or two or three or four people over here who have no idea where I am or why I moved away and then I would move myself back and just repeat what had gone on. Essentially, you’re doing twice the work, and I did that numerous times.”

Creating a Social Environment

David found “it was harder to build relationships with my students participating remotely and was challenging to create a positive and supportive learning environment.” Ronald “needed help assessing student understanding when some students were participating remotely.” He added that “it made harder to adjust instruction accordingly.” David added that he “needed help keeping students motivated and engaged because some students were physically present while others were remote. It took more work to facilitate in-person learning effectively.” Students like Ryan, saw how “challenging it was for the teachers because they were trying to level it out between how to talk to the people online and how to talk to the people in class.”

It's important to ensure that all students had access to a well-rounded education that includes social and extracurricular experiences. Helena believed that “social interaction and building relationships with peers is an important aspect of a well-rounded education and is beneficial for student's mental and emotional well-being.” David “had students pair up with

people they know and avoid the social anxiety they may have to meet new faces.” Helena explained how “the ability to return to extracurricular activities provided students with opportunities to engage in activities they are passionate about.” She also added that it “could help promote mental and emotional well-being and reduce isolation and loneliness.” Rose thought, “being around people was really helpful because I was in yearbook. We were able to sit in a room together and share ideas and like see what everyone was working on instead of being on a zoom screen.”

Mental Health Counselors

Howard “was trying to be there for and help all the kids who suffered from their mental health, you know, that they had either pre-COVID or may have been caused during COVID. I'm not a psychologist, so I do not have the proper training to be as helpful as I want to be.” Howard explained how “the mental health counselors provided students with a safe and supportive space to express their emotions and feelings related to the, you know, challenges due to the pandemic.” Helena thought that “one of the most important things that came out of the pandemic was getting the mental health counselors on campus for the kids and families, etc.” She also added that “mental health counselors could help to identify and address mental health concerns that the pandemic and the challenges of hybrid learning may have caused.” Rose stated that the mental health counselors “taught me coping strategies and tools to manage stress and anxiety.” Ronald believed that “access to counseling services, creating supportive learning environments, and promoting positive coping skills, teachers and school administrators could ensure that students have the resources they needed to succeed during hybrid learning.” Lily “really valued just the

different ways teachers and counselors figured out how to support us while we were in the different phases of the pandemic.”

Table 3

Experiences During Hybrid Learning

Names	Challenges	Support
Lily		I really valued just the different ways teachers and counselors figured out how to support us while we were in the different phases of the pandemic.
Rose		Being around people was really helpful because I was in yearbook. We were able to sit in a room together and share ideas and like see what everyone was working on instead of being on a zoom screen
Mona		I liked the face-to-face classes. It really created like that connection of paying attention because when I have a screen in front of me, I get distracted.
Ryan	Challenging it was for the teachers because they were trying to level it out between how to talk to the people online and how to talk to the people in class.	The mental health counselors “taught me coping strategies and tools to manage stress and anxiety.

Table 3 (continued)

Experiences During Hybrid Learning

Names	Challenges	Support
David	<p>Having to balance and making sure they're on the same page was challenging. Not having students in the classroom finish first and just wait around for the next step waiting for the kids in the virtual room to catch up, having a balance, and not making them feel bored.</p> <p>Because of my subject matter, having a mask did affect my performance and the students' performance a little bit because it is a visual language. I didn't need to have my facial expressions enhanced by having a mask on, and I felt students had more questions about the facial expressions, which led me to learn how to be more verbal and increase my communication skills to convey what I am showing on the face. It takes much longer.</p>	<p>I had students pair up with people they know and avoid the social anxiety they may have to meet new faces.</p>
Ronald	<p>I would move out of range, and then almost as an afterthought, I'd say, wait a minute, I've got one or two or three or four people over here who have no idea where I am or why I moved away and then I would move myself back and just repeat what had gone on. Essentially you're doing twice the work, and I did that numerous times.</p>	<p>Access to counseling services, creating supportive learning environments, and promoting positive coping skills, teachers and school administrators could ensure that students have the resources they needed to succeed during hybrid learning.</p>
Helena	<p>Social interaction and building relationships with peers are an important aspect of a well-rounded education and is beneficial for student's mental and emotional well-being.</p>	<p>Mental health counselors could help to identify and address mental health concerns that the pandemic and the challenges of hybrid learning may have caused.</p>

Table 3 (continued)

Experiences During Hybrid Learning

Names	Challenges	Support
Howard	The main challenge of implementing county COVID guidelines during hybrid learning is ensuring that all students, parents, staff members, and visitors are, you know, aware of the rules and following them consistently.	The mental health counselors provided students with a safe and supportive space to express their emotions and feelings related to the, you know, challenges due to the pandemic.

The Return to Campus

On the first day, all students came into the classroom. Everyone had masks on. It feels surreal. It felt like a movie. David

With the return of face-to-face instruction, students experience a sense of engagement and connection with their teachers and peers. Lily felt that “I had a really big support system. It was nice to feel like I had like parents on campus too, even though it's like they're your teacher, but also you can have like a relationship with them. So they help you with your life and with school and just balancing everything.” Mona said that “returning to face-to-face instruction created a more positive learning environment and allowed for more communication between students and teachers.” Ronald highlights that “improved communication led to a better understanding of the material and allowed for more productive discussions in class.” David “placed the seats in a circular fashion where everyone can see each and hear each other. In case anyone wanted to add to the conversation, they could also do that from a healthy distance.” David added that “face-to-face instruction increased collaboration among students and provided an opportunity for meaningful interaction.

The New Normal

Howard said that “ensuring the health and safety of students, staff, and faculty while, you know, maintaining social distancing and implementing other safety protocols, such as, you know, mask-wearing, was difficult and time-consuming. Howard then added, “COVID was an issue. The screening and contact tracing, you know, that had to be a priority. All efforts usually had to go to that. Then everything else had to be put on the back burner, which really affected, you know, our school.” Students, staff, and faculty like Ronald “adjusted to new routines and protocols related to health and safety.” David mentioned that “the evolving nature of the pandemic and the uncertainty surrounding it made it difficult to predict how long it will take for the school to return to normalcy. It created anxiety and stress among the school community.”

Helena “saw how difficult it was to keep the responsibility of keeping the kids like engaged. It's very, very hard. The worry with the kids back was that they had lost so much in terms of not just their education in terms of their skills but their social skills. I think I sensed there was so much anxiety and stress that had built up with the kids returning. There was kind of a caution of, okay, don't push them too hard.” Students like Lily experienced a significant change in how they learned due to remote or hybrid learning, and adjusting to traditional face-to-face instruction was difficult. Lily explained, “the workload felt kind of like a train that keeps coming. Also, all the extracurriculars were back. So, it was like juggling everything, like all at the same time all over again. So, it was just like that overwhelming feeling all over again.”

David noticed the “students who have fallen behind during remote or hybrid learning needed help to catch up with their peers when they return to in-person instruction.” Ronald observed, “their writing ability was completely obvious, that there were two years left of their

education. I was correcting grammar in an Advanced Placement (AP) class for seniors.”

Advanced Placement courses provide high school students with the opportunity to undertake college-level coursework before graduating. Howard noticed that “with remote or hybrid learning, it took a lot of work for our teachers to assess and address learning gaps, you know, which led to further challenges in catching up.” Ronald highlighted, “the last time the freshmen had been in school was in seventh grade. Just to bring them up to the point where they needed to be taken the first semester was extremely frustrating and difficult. I think we can all see the damage that two years out of a classroom did to last year’s group of seniors, juniors, sophomores, and freshmen. I believe, across the board, I was disappointed in my own abilities, and I felt that I had, in some way, let them down.”

Asynchronous Friday

Asynchronous days could reduce stress by allowing students to work at their own pace and schedule, allowing them to balance their academic and personal responsibilities. Helena “believed asynchronous days improved well-being by allowing teachers and students to take breaks as needed and prioritize self-care activities, such as exercise, mindfulness, and stress management techniques. Lily thought, “it was good to have Fridays asynchronous just because you get all the work, and then you have Friday to kinda, like, take it all in, see what you have to do, and then recuperate yourself for the next week.” Mona “loved asynchronous Fridays. I love them. It helped me to focus more on myself those days.”

Ronald stated that “asynchronous days reduced pressure by giving students more time to complete assignments and teachers to catch up on work, which could reduce stress.” David believed “asynchronous Fridays helped me as a professional during the gradual transition. I saw

the results from students because they felt more in tune with their academic transition as well. I felt that by seeing their performance in their homework submissions, test results, etc., that the extra day of having to complete homework and study to prepare that transition period benefited them.” Helena “felt more in control and more organized. It put me in a better place where I felt better mentally and emotionally.” Howard said that “asynchronous Fridays were extremely helpful for me mentally and catching up on, you know, the other aspects of the job.”

Helena pointed out how asynchronous days could “help students spend more quality time with their family, which could benefit their mental health and well-being.”

Sweatpants Mondays

Howard addressed that “dress codes that were comfortable and appropriate could, you know, improve focus by reducing distractions and allowing students to be more comfortable during the school day.” Rose agreed and said that “wearing sweatpants was very comfortable. It made me feel like I'm at home and was very uplifting.” Howard mentioned that “dress codes could improve behavior by, you know, reducing distractions and promoting a more positive school culture.” Lily felt “nice to wear sweats because like, we feel like it's not just school, like, at least, there's a little bit of fun to it. So I think that definitely helped get everyone like kind of back into like the right headspace.” Ryan highlighted that “sweatpants Mondays really helped the teachers and students mentally feel as if they were already home. I was just in the classroom, but still in sweats. So I had that level of comfort and reassurance. So, I know that really helped the students and teachers feel comfortable and less stressed.”

Table 4

Experiences During the Return to School

Names	Challenges	Support
Lily	The workload felt kind of like a train that keeps coming. Also, all the extracurriculars were back. So it was like juggling everything, like all at the same time all over again. So it was just like that overwhelming feeling all over again.	I had a really big support system. It was nice to feel like I had like parents on campus too, even though it's like they're your teacher, but also you can have like a relationship with them. So they help you with your life and with school and just balancing everything. It was good to have Fridays asynchronous just because you get all the work, and then you have Friday to kinda, like, take it all in, see what you have to do, and then recuperate yourself for the next week.
Rose		Wearing sweatpants was very comfortable. It made me feel like I'm at home and was very uplifting.”
Mona	Returning to face-to-face instruction created a more positive learning environment and allowed for more communication between students and teachers.	Returning to face-to-face instruction created a more positive learning environment and allowed for more communication between students and teachers. I loved asynchronous Fridays. I love them. It helped me to focus more on myself those days.
Ryan		Sweatpants Mondays really helped the teachers and students mentally feel as if they were already home. I was just in the classroom, but still in sweats. So, I had that level of comfort and reassurance. So, I know that really helped the students and teachers feel comfortable and less stressed.

Table 4 (continued)

Experiences During the Return to School

Names	Challenges	Support
David	<p>The evolving nature of the pandemic and the uncertainty surrounding it made it difficult to predict how long it will take for the school to return to normalcy. It created anxiety and stress among the school community.</p> <p>Students who have fallen behind during remote or hybrid learning needed help to catch up with their peers when they return to in-person instruction.</p>	<p>I placed the seats in a circular fashion where everyone can see each and hear each other. In case anyone wanted to add to the conversation, they could also do that from a healthy distance.”</p> <p>Asynchronous Fridays helped me as a professional during the gradual transition. I saw the results from students because they felt more in tune with their academic transition as well. I felt that by seeing their performance in their homework submissions, test results, etc., that the extra day of having to complete homework and study to prepare that transition period benefited them.</p>
Ronald	<p>Their writing ability was completely obvious, that there were two years left of their education. I was correcting grammar in an AP class for seniors.</p> <p>The last time the freshmen had been in school was in seventh grade. Just to bring them up to the point where they needed to be taken the first semester was extremely frustrating and difficult. I think we can all see the damage that two years out of a classroom did to last year's group of seniors, juniors, sophomores, and freshmen. I believe, across the board, I was disappointed in my own abilities, and I felt that I had, in some way, let them down.</p>	<p>Improved communication led to a better understanding of the material and allowed for more productive discussions in class.</p> <p>Asynchronous days could reduce pressure by giving students more time to complete assignments and teachers to catch up on work, which could reduce stress.</p>
Helena	<p>I saw how difficult it was to keep the responsibility of keeping the kids like engaged. It's very, very hard. The worry with the kids back was that they had lost so much in terms of not just their education in terms of their skills but their social skills. I think I sensed there was so much anxiety and stress that had built up with the kids returning. There was kind of a caution of, okay, don't push them too hard.</p>	<p>I believed asynchronous days could improve well-being by allowing teachers and students to take breaks as needed and prioritize self-care activities, such as exercise, mindfulness, and stress management techniques.</p> <p>I felt more in control and more organized. It put me in a better place where I felt better mentally and emotionally.</p>

Table 4 (continued)

Experiences During the Return to School

Names	Challenges	Support
Howard	<p>COVID was an issue. The screening and contact tracing, you know, that had to be a priority. All efforts usually had to go to that. Then everything else had to be put on the back burner, which really affected, you know, our school.</p> <p>With remote or hybrid learning, it took a lot of work for our teachers to assess and address learning gaps, you know, which led to further challenges in catching up.</p>	<p>Asynchronous Fridays were extremely helpful for me mentally and catching up on, you know, the other aspects of the job.</p> <p>Dress codes that were comfortable and appropriate could, you know, improve focus by reducing distractions and allowing students to be more comfortable during the school day.</p>

Resilience

Early researchers in child and family studies emphasized the importance of identifying factors that either helped individuals and families cope with adversity or mitigated its negative effects. They recognized that while some individuals or families may be more susceptible to adversity, others appeared to be more resilient and better equipped to bounce back from traumatic experiences or family crises (Nichols, 2013). In some cases, protective factors such as good emotional regulation or problem-solving skills could counteract the risks posed by adversities like poverty or violence. In other cases, protective factors like having a supportive friend or mentor were different from the vulnerabilities studied in earlier models of stress.

Parental distress was a significant risk factor for negative mental health outcomes in children during the COVID-19 pandemic quarantine (Adams et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important to study protective factors associated with resilience, as evidence suggests that many protective factors come from individual, family, and community resources (Woods-Jaeger et al., 2018). Positive family relationships and a sense of satisfaction with family relationships may

have indicated early exposure to nurturing, supportive, and secure care within the family context (Waters & Cummings, 2000). Previous research had also found that children tend to adopt the same social relationship strategies as their parents, highlighting the importance of early exposure to secure family relationships for developing adaptive coping skills that were critical for seeking support and solving problems in school (Eng et al., 2001).

Promotive and Protective Factors

Resilience was associated with protective factors that come from different areas, including individual characteristics, social environments, and family dynamics (Werner, 1992). Adolescents who were classified as resilient based on their risk exposure and outcomes reported higher levels of family social support and positive relationships (Carbonell et al., 2002). Parent-child interactions were also known to be a significant factor in promoting resilience, as parenting fulfills several functions in child development, cultural transmission, and societal well-being (Bornstein, 2015).

Resilience was not just about bouncing back from stressful experiences, but rather adapting and reorganizing in response to them (Baumber et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2008). It involved learning how to change, cope, and achieve positive outcomes in the face of risk factors that disrupt normal development (Garmezy et al., 1984; Walker, 2019). Resilience was seen as an important way to promote student well-being, as it could help individuals navigate stressful environments more effectively (Hartley, 2011) and was critical in promoting adaptive recovery from threats to one's well-being (Leipold et al., 2019). Many resilience theorists have attempted to identify factors that can either enhance or diminish resilience in complex systems (Carpenter et al., 2012).

Resilience was associated with positive adjustment and the ability to overcome risk, and experiencing stress was necessary for building resilience, according to Luthar et al. (2000). However, positive development alone was not enough to determine resilience, as exposure to risk was also required to disrupt development, as noted by Werner (1992). The process of developing resilience was complex, and the effectiveness of various protective factors may have depended on the specific risk and outcome being studied, as pointed out by Fergus and Zimmerman (2005). Doty et al. (2017) proposed a model of cascading resilience, which emphasized the role of parenting in promoting resilience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the resilience of adolescents was put to the test.

The administration sent a survey on the school community's mental health in mid-February. The majority of the school community's mental health status was below average. The administration's response was to make every Friday until Easter Break "asynchronous." At this time, students and teachers could catch up on work and have a day for themselves. Nearing Easter Break, the administration emailed a survey asking all stakeholders (teachers, students, and parents) for feedback on asynchronous Fridays and if they want to continue for the remainder of the year. Most stakeholders enjoyed and found asynchronous Fridays beneficial and were as approved for the rest of the year.

Even though there were many guidelines, school leadership organizations continued to create activities to boost morale and build community. Through athletic events, class competitions, and retreats, the students were finding ways to bridge the gap between social development and getting to know the sophomore and freshman classes since it was their first time on campus. The associated student body noticed the same stresses toward the end of the

year. For every Monday in May, the school community was able to wear sweats. The school called it “sweats Monday.” With Fridays asynchronous and wearing sweats in May, the stresses and the displays of anxiety decreased rapidly. The resilience shown by the school community throughout the 2021-2022 school year showed how the care and support of each other could make a difference in a successful school year.

Promotive Factors

Promotive factors were elements or conditions that support individuals’ positive development and well-being. They could enhance and promote positive behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes. For example, Rose believed “positive relationships with family, friends, and teachers and supportive and caring relationships with others could help promote a sense of belonging and self-worth.” Ryan “knew instantly that, growing up, my family was always hard on me because, obviously, they want it to be successful. So, I knew I had my parents’ support through it.” Helena mentioned “exposure to positive role models, like my father, could help promote positive behaviors and attitudes.” Lily was “surrounded by a group of people that have worked hard, coming from a family of immigrants. They’ve always reminded my sister and me of the importance of like perseverance and hard work. Always knowing like your roots and your culture and where you came from, especially knowing that there will be hardships but like working through the hardships is how we get through them.”

Promotive factors were important to consider when working with individuals and communities, as they could help to support positive behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes. Howard explained that “good emotional and mental well-being could help promote resilience, you know, and the ability to cope with stress and adversity.” Ronald was “taught to keep my body and mind

active. My parents always told me a sharp mind and healthy body would help me adapt to my environment.”

Protective Factors

Protective factors were elements or conditions that could help reduce risk factors’ negative impact and promote positive development and well-being. Ronald said, “they could be used to buffer against negative outcomes and promote resilience.” Helena mentions “having supportive and caring relationships with others could help to provide a sense of belonging, security, and emotional support.” Howard was “raised by the saying “people you hang out with is the reflection of you.” You know, I have always been a cautious person and over-protective of others and myself. That's probably why I was nervous about whether we were doing the right thing for the whole guideline thing, you know. I want to make sure we are following everything we need to follow.”

Mona highlighted having a “positive sense of self-worth and self-esteem could help to promote a sense of resilience and self-efficacy.” Mona said, “moving from foster care to adoption helped me understand the value of family support and love for myself. During the pandemic, I focused on what could help me mentally.” Helena explained that “having effective coping skills can help individuals to manage stress and negative emotions.” David “was a translator for my parents who, at the time when I was eight, they knew very little English. I had to be the middle person in many situations, my brother, he’s deaf, so I had to be that middle person. So being patient helped me receive, process, and output information. During remote learning, my patience aided in the repetition and simplification of the Zoom classroom.”

Ronald mentioned how “having effective problem-solving skills could help individuals to navigate challenges and find solutions.” In addition, Howard believed “being resilient could help individuals bounce back from adversity and, you know, cope with stress.” Helena reflected, “growing up, I was the oldest, and I had I took on a lot of responsibility. I feel like I would. I grew up with the mentality that there's always a way. I would not have gotten through the pandemic professionally and personally without my ethic of working and thinking outside the box.” Ryan mentioned, “a strong social support network could provide emotional support during difficult times.” Rose understands that “just from my experience and stuff. I’ve been anxious like my whole life. Becoming an Eagle Scout and working with my therapist helped me manage my frustrations. I learned to look at my feet and walk away.” David advocated to be “involved in a supportive community that could provide a sense of belonging, social support, and opportunities for personal growth.” Protective factors were important to consider when working with individuals and communities, as they could help to buffer against adverse outcomes and promote resilience.

Table 5*Promotive and Protective Factors*

Names	Promotive/Protective Factor	Resilience
Lily	I was surrounded by a group of people that have worked hard, coming from a family of immigrants. They've always reminded my sister and me of the importance of like perseverance and hard work.	Always knowing like your roots and your culture and where you came from, especially knowing that there will be hardships but like working through the hardships is how we get through them.
Rose	Positive relationships with family, friends, and teachers and supportive and caring relationships with others could help promote a sense of belonging and self-worth.	Just from my experience and stuff. I've been anxious like my whole life. Becoming an Eagle Scout and working with my therapist helped me manage my frustrations. I learned to look at my feet and walk away.
Mona	Moving from foster care to adoption helped me understand the value of family support and love for myself. During the pandemic, I focused on what could help me mentally.	Positive sense of self-worth and self-esteem could help to promote a sense of resilience and self-efficacy.
Ryan	Knew instantly that, growing up, my family was always hard on me because, obviously, they want it to be successful. So, I knew I had my parents' support through it.	A strong social support network could provide emotional support during difficult times.
David	I was a translator for my parents who, at the time when I was eight, they knew very little English. I had to be the middle person in a lot of situations, my brother he's deaf, so I had to be that middle person. So being patient helped me receive, process, and output information. During remote learning, my patience aided in the repetition and simplification of the Zoom classroom.	Involved in a supportive community that could provide a sense of belonging, social support, and opportunities for personal growth.
Ronald	I was taught to keep my body and mind active. My parents always told me a sharp mind and healthy body would help me adapt to my environment.	They could be used to buffer against negative outcomes and promote resilience. Having effective problem-solving skills could help individuals to navigate challenges and find solutions.

Table 5 (continued)

Promotive and Protective Factors

Names	Promotive/Protective Factor	Resilience
Helena	Exposure to positive role models, like my father, could help promote positive behaviors and attitudes.	Having supportive and caring relationships with others could help to provide a sense of belonging, security, and emotional support. Having effective coping skills can help individuals to manage stress and negative emotions.
Howard	I was raised by the saying “people you hang out with is the reflection of you.” You know, I have always been a cautious person and over-protective of others and myself. That’s probably why I was nervous about whether we were doing the right thing for the whole guideline thing, you know. I want to make sure we are following everything we need to follow.	Good emotional and mental well-being could help promote resilience, you know, and the ability to cope with stress and adversity.

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on schools and the education system, and this study aimed to examine the experiences of schools during this time. Through qualitative interviews with school administrators, teachers, and students, the study found that schools faced numerous challenges, including shifting to remote learning, maintaining student engagement, addressing technological barriers, and managing the psychological impact of the pandemic on students and staff.

Despite these challenges, the study also found that schools demonstrated remarkable resilience and creativity in their responses to the pandemic. For example, schools implemented innovative approaches to teaching and learning and strengthened collaboration and support among teachers and staff. The study also highlighted disparities in limited educational

opportunities due to low motivation and distractions that existed for students during the pandemic, as well as experiences of social isolation and stress.

The findings of this study demonstrated the resilience and determination of schools in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and highlight the need for continued support and resources to address the challenges faced by schools and students. The study provides valuable insights for education leaders in their efforts to support schools and ensure a safe, effective, and equitable education for all students in the aftermath of the pandemic.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had significantly impacted education, with schools worldwide adapting to new ways of teaching and learning quickly. The experiences of students, teachers, and administrators during this time have been varied and complex, with a range of challenges and successes. The sudden shift to remote learning highlighted equity concerns and required teachers and students to adapt to new technologies and teaching methods quickly. The pandemic had also emphasized the importance of social-emotional learning and has necessary communication and collaboration among teachers, students, and parents. As the world continues to navigate the ongoing pandemic, it was important to understand the experiences of schools and the strategies they have used to support the educational needs of students while also addressing the mental health concerns caused by the pandemic.

Schools have needed help to provide students with the same level of support and resources that they would have received in an in-person setting, such as access to specialized services and support for students with special needs. Furthermore, many students and teachers have struggled with the isolation and lack of face-to-face interaction that comes with remote learning. These factors have made it difficult for some students to engage with the curriculum and have impacted their academic progress.

Despite these challenges, many schools have succeeded during the pandemic by implementing new strategies and technologies to support students' learning. For example, many teachers have quickly adapted to new teaching methods, such as using virtual platforms for live

instruction, and have used technology to create interactive and engaging lessons. Administrators and teachers have also been able to use technology to help monitor student progress and provide personalized support to struggling students. Additionally, many schools have prioritized the mental health and well-being of their students, teachers, and staff by providing resources and support for coping with the stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic. This can include providing access to mental health counseling, creating safe spaces for students to connect with their peers, and incorporating self-care and mindfulness practices into the curriculum.

Discussion of Findings

What Were the Experiences of the Bishop John Paul Academy Community During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Including Remote Learning, Hybrid Learning, and the Return to Campus?

Remote learning had demonstrated that students could continue to learn and progress even when not physically present in a traditional classroom setting. The closure of schools due to the pandemic had forced teachers and students to adapt to this new reality, which had presented several challenges. Several factors, such as access to digital learning, isolation from teachers and peers, social distancing, a supportive home environment, and stable information technology infrastructure, are intertwined with students' motivation and academic performance during the pandemic (Balayar & Langlais, 2021). The shift to remote learning had been challenging for students as it has removed both the desire and the opportunity to be productive (Bolumole, 2020). However, despite some initial difficulties, many educators, students, and parents have realized that remote learning can be just as effective as in-person education. Accessing and using technology was essential for teachers and students to participate in remote learning. Schools

must ensure that students have the necessary technology and internet access to participate.

Bishop John Paul Academy was fortunate to have provided all students and teachers with iPads with cellular data and hotspots, as well as computer monitors, headsets, and document cameras for remote learning.

The social development of students had been significantly impacted by the shift to online learning, as evidenced by reports of demotivation, social isolation, and displacement among many students (Hall & Batty, 2020; Yamin, 2020). In some cases, anxiety related to the pandemic may exacerbated these feelings (Sood & Shama, 2021). The lack of in-person interactions had deprived students of crucial opportunities for socialization, relationship-building, and personal growth during their formative years. This limited interaction could reduce social presence, leaving remote students feeling unmotivated, undervalued, and anonymous (Plante & Asselin, 2014).

At the same time, the pandemic had also presented new challenges and opportunities for student social development, such as collaborative projects and group work. David and Helena discussed how collaboration could help students to develop important teamwork and socialization skills. The student participants in the study (Rose, Lily, Mona, and Ryan) emphasized the need for schools to provide opportunities for socialization even when students were not in a traditional classroom setting. For example, tutoring and group project meetings held after school via Zoom or Google Meet allow students opportunities to socialize even when they cannot be on campus.

As the students discussed their experiences of isolation during the pandemic, the need for socialization among students was vital. Anxiety related to the pandemic may exacerbate these

feelings in some students (Zhang et al., 2021). They all stated that their interaction via phone, text, or computer was different from in-person socialization. Newman and Dusenbury (2015) found that students who managed behaviors and emotions, created positive relationships, and participated in group activities were more academically successful. This was supported by other studies, such as Jones et al. (2015), who found a positive relationship between above-average social-emotional skills and academic success, and Engle et al. (2010), who found that these skills enhanced positive engagement with teachers and classmates, leading to positive attitudes and motivation about school. Rose's experience in her in-person yearbook class described the importance of in-person collaboration and group work.

The pandemic had highlighted the importance of adaptability and flexibility as teachers had to quickly adapt to remote teaching and accommodate the needs of students and families. The support of the Bishop John Paul Academy for each other aided in students' and teachers' adaptability and flexibility. The constant communication between all stakeholders aided in adjustments the administration, teachers, and students had to make during the pandemic. It had shown that teachers could continue delivering instruction effectively and supporting student learning even when not in a traditional classroom setting. While this was not an easy transition, it had also given teachers unique opportunities to grow and innovate in their craft.

The pandemic had accelerated the need for teachers to have continuous professional development to acquire new skills, such as online teaching and new technology. In addition, the pandemic had highlighted the importance of providing flexible instruction, such as hybrid instruction. The teachers, especially David and Ronald, appreciated the professional development and the "tech buddies" to help them through remote and hybrid learning. In

addition, the teacher check-ins by the administration and counseling department supported their teachers who were struggling professionally and personally.

Teachers adopted the administration's flexible approach to their students during remote learning. Teachers recognized the importance of empathy and emotional intelligence in emotional education, as they helped students cope with the stresses of the pandemic and academic pressures (Schoeps et al., 2020). The sudden shift to remote learning caused students to lose access to in-person interaction and learning environments, negatively impacting their noncognitive and psychosocial skills such as self-control, creativity, and empathy (Garcia & Weiss, 2020).

Students often struggle with self-directed learning skills such as time management, organization, and self-regulation in a remote learning environment (Kocdar et al., 2018). Students learning online must independently activate these skills to complete their work and assignments on time and without procrastination (Govindarajan & Srivastava, 2020). However, distractions could lead to procrastination. Students who experienced a greater negative impact on their mental health during the pandemic were likelier to report higher stress levels related to coursework, social distancing, time management, and decreased socialization with peers (Varadarajan et al., 2021). Teachers who did not take any late work decided to allow late work to be turned in. Teachers would voluntarily help students over Zoom outside of contractual hours. The teachers' flexibility accommodated students who struggled with motivation or whose responsibilities increased due to parents working or losing their jobs.

When hybrid learning began, teachers did their best by teaching students both in-person and online. The challenges of instruction and learning for both teachers were due to the different

locations students were in. Ronald would need to remember that he had students on Zoom, so he had to adapt even though it was twice the work. David had difficulty due to the mask mandate. In American Sign Language, facial expressions change the meaning of the sign. It took much work for feedback from both him and his students.

The county guidelines challenged the school community in both hybrid and in-person learning. Social distancing, mask-wearing, and constant cleaning of desks and high-touch areas became the new normal for the school community. The administration and teachers were challenged to enforce the rules to students, mainly wearing the masks correctly. The enforcement of the guidelines took priority and delayed the regular responsibilities of school operations. Howard was frustrated as his regular job duties accumulated as he was contacted tracing, contacting parents, updating the transmission database, and ensuring all guidelines were enforced.

During the pandemic, it became evident that social and emotional support was crucial for both students and teachers. Socioemotional learning promotes positive student outcomes and includes a sense of belonging in the classroom environment (Delahunty et al., 2014). Schools must find ways to provide this support even when students are not physically present in the classroom. The presence of mental health counselors at schools proved to be effective in improving the mental health of the school community. Teachers also played an important role in checking their students' mental health through activities such as bell work, icebreakers, and exit tickets, demonstrating their care for their students.

Regrettably, the COVID-19 pandemic had disturbed the feeling of connectedness among students because remote learning was less immediate, more solitary, and more dispersed than in-

person learning (Lowenthal & Dennen, 2017). Consequently, students had minimal chances for continuous real-time social engagement with their peers and instructors. This lack of opportunities for interaction could decrease the feeling of social presence (Rodriguez-Llanes et al., 2013) and raise the possibility of remote students feeling demotivated, undervalued, and anonymous (Plante & Asselin, 2014).

According to the students, they were able to build relationships with their teachers during remote, hybrid, and in-person learning. They realized they were all in this together. The built relationships between the teachers and the students allowed the students to open up and share their feelings. This allowed the teachers to understand what the students were going through. The care and love the students received from their teachers increased their motivation and improved their mental health.

The administration also saw the low morale and energy from the school community. The school sent out a mental health survey and ideas to help improve their mental health. In March, Bishop John Paul Academy made every Friday asynchronous so teachers and students could slow their week down to decrease their anxiety and stress levels. The teachers and students enjoyed this because they could focus on themselves and use the extra day as a reset day. The school also allowed the teachers and students to wear sweats to work every Monday in April. According to the students and teachers, wearing sweats helped them feel relaxed as they felt comfortable and had an at-home feeling.

What Promotive and Protective Factors Fostered Resilience Among the Bishop John Paul Academy Community During the Pandemic?

Resilience was an effective approach to promote student well-being because it helps individuals to navigate challenging environments (Hartley, 2011). It was critical in facilitating adaptive recovery and helped individuals to cope with threats to their well-being (Leipold et al., 2019). Many resilience theorists have tried to identify factors that could enhance or reduce resilience in complex systems (Carpenter et al., 2012). According to research, resilience was positively linked to measures of mental health (Hu et al., 2015). The positive correlation between mental health and resilience was most dominant after exposure to significant adversity. Resilience involved overcoming risks and was associated with positive adjustment.

To cope with the challenges of the pandemic, students and teachers relied on promotive and protective factors. Some students had strong support systems at home and at school, which helped them to perform better academically and have positive mental health. These students knew that they had someone to turn to when facing tough situations. In the case of Rose, she learned to slow down and leave her frustrations behind to get through challenging situations. The interactions between parents and children have also played a critical role in building resilience, as parenting fulfills various functions in child development, cultural transmission, and the well-being of societies. For example, Lily and Ryan learned about hard work and overcoming obstacles from their parents.

Individual Resilience

The capacity of an individual to effectively cope with and recover from challenging situations or difficulties, such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, without negatively

impacting their mental health or overall well-being was defined as individual resilience, as stated by Bonanno (2004). Individuals who exhibited resilience were characterized by their ability to acknowledge and adjust to reality, maintain their personal beliefs and values, and adapt to significant changes, according to Sonn and Fisher (1998). They also tend to have a positive approach to problem-solving and could handle challenges well. In contrast, individuals with low resilience tend to experience negative emotions and may find it difficult to overcome adversity, according to Luthans and Youssef (2004). Developing individual resilience was critical in promoting positive adaptation and effectively coping with the challenges of the pandemic, particularly in education (Ho & Chan, 2022).

During the pandemic, schools recognized the importance of prioritizing the development of individual resilience, including Bishop John Paul Academy. To support students' well-being and mental health, the academy implemented a range of strategies and practices. These included providing access to counseling services and emotional support, promoting social connections through collaborative classroom activities, offering school-wide extracurricular activities, and fostering positive mindsets through regular teacher check-ins. According to student feedback, these efforts were effective in supporting their well-being and maintaining their motivation and engagement in learning despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

The teachers and administrators learned work ethic and how to overcome adversity by working through it. Helena knew there was always a solution to anything, regardless of how difficult the situation was. Ronald's adaptation to his environment helped him get through various adversities throughout his life. Howard and David's patience, care, and understanding for their community ensured they do everything right to get through the challenges. The school

community's resilience through the pandemic exposed the various promotions and protective factors of the stakeholders. Knowing that the school community will do this together, the endless support and care for each other built their resilience through the pandemic's many challenges.

Institutional Resilience

Institutions play a crucial role in meeting the social, economic, and cultural needs of society. However, they also serve as moral communities that bring together diverse segments of society through shared values, objectives, and experiences, thereby promoting social unity (Trubshaw, 2021). Institutional resilience typically refers to the ability of social institutions to adapt to external factors over time. This concept emphasizes the institutions' capacity to absorb disturbances and reorganize themselves to function effectively (Martin, 2018). However, when sudden shocks occur, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus of institutional resilience should shift toward the ability of institutions to maintain their operating capacities in the face of disturbances (Handmer & Dovers, 1996). Resilience involves a sequential process of activities carried out by individuals and systems in response to shocks (Dulak et al., 2022). Schools have faced various challenges during the pandemic, such as managing limited resources, navigating health and safety protocols, and addressing equity and access concerns. These challenges have tested the institutional resilience of schools, highlighting the importance of proactive planning and preparation.

To maintain their core functions and values, schools must be able to adapt and respond effectively to disruptive events like the pandemic. Institutional resilience was the ability of a school to do so without compromising its mission, and it involves strategies like contingency planning, risk management, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement (Herrfahrdt-Pähle

& Pahl-Wostl, 2012). Institutional resilience was critical for schools to continue providing quality education and support to students while maintaining operations and reputation. By maintaining internal controllability, schools could remain stable and reduce uncertainty (Herrfahrdt-Pähle & Pahl-Wostl, 2012). Organizational structures and administrative procedures must be flexible to enable schools to self-restore and bounce back in response to disruptions (Martin, 2018).

Bishop John Paul Academy implemented various strategies and practices during the pandemic to build institutional resilience. According to Ronald and David, the school developed contingency plans and invested in technology infrastructure and training to better adapt to the pandemic. Second, Howard and Helena highlighted the critical role of partnerships and collaboration in building institutional resilience. Howard worked closely with local authorities, community organizations, and families could better coordinate responses and share resources. Third, Helena and Howard discussed how the pandemic had underscored the need to prioritize mental health and well-being in building institutional resilience. Bishop John Paul Academy provided students and staff with emotional support and counseling services. According to Rose, Howard, and Helena, they maintained the continuity of learning and support during the pandemic due to the emotional support and counseling services.

Moving forward, educational policymakers and practitioners should prioritize investments in building school institutional resilience. This may include developing guidelines and best practices for contingency planning, investing in technology infrastructure and training, promoting collaboration and partnership with local stakeholders, and prioritizing mental health and well-being. By investing in institutional resilience, schools could better prepare for and

respond to future disruptions while maintaining their core functions and values. These challenges have tested the institutional resilience of schools like Bishop John Paul Academy and highlighted the importance of proactive planning and preparation.

Limitations

Sample

A small qualitative sample size cannot be an adequate generalization for all high school students and teachers' experiences during remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. All participants' experiences were from a single school. The sample of students, teachers, or staff available at a specific school site may not be representative of the larger population, which can limit the generalizability of the findings.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods such as surveys, interviews, and observations could not be able to capture all the aspects of the school site's experiences during the pandemic. The scope of research could be limited to a specific aspect or subject of the school site's experiences during the pandemic, which could make it difficult to gather a comprehensive data set. The experiences during the pandemic were relatively recent, and thus memories of those events could be affected by recency bias, which could limit the accuracy of the data collected. Researchers could be subject to bias in their observations and data collection, which can limit the validity and reliability of the findings.

Implications

Conceptual Framework Implications

A resilience framework could help individuals and communities cope with the experiences of the pandemic. Fostering supportive relationships with family, friends, and community members could provide emotional and social support, which was crucial for resilience. Developing positive coping strategies, such as exercise, mindfulness, and stress management techniques, could help individuals to manage stress and maintain well-being. Having a sense of purpose, such as a goal or a project to work on, could provide a sense of direction and meaning, which could be particularly important during difficult times.

Being flexible and adaptable in the face of change could help individuals to cope with uncertainty and navigate new challenges. Prioritizing self-care, including physical, emotional, and mental well-being, was essential for maintaining resilience. Emotional regulation could help to reduce negative emotions and increase positive ones. A positive perspective could help see the opportunities and possibilities that can come from difficult situations. Continuously learning and developing new skills could help individuals navigate the pandemic's challenges and emerge stronger.

Implications for Practice

The pandemic had emphasized the need for mental health support and social-emotional learning for students, teachers, and families, as they could be experiencing increased stress and anxiety due to the pandemic. The importance of collaboration and communication, as teachers, students, and parents have had to work together to adapt to new learning environments.

Teachers' need for ongoing professional development had been highlighted as they quickly adapt to new teaching methods and technologies. Due to the school closures, the importance of technology integration in education, as remote learning has become an option for many students. As the pandemic halted social and learning development, ongoing monitoring and evaluation of educational practices were needed to ensure that students received the education they needed during these challenging times.

Recommendations

Mental Health Awareness

Schools should be aware of mental health during the pandemic because the COVID-19 pandemic had profoundly impacted students, teachers, and staff physically and mentally. The sudden shift to remote learning had taken a toll on mental health, leading to increased anxiety, stress, and other mental health conditions. Research had indicated that the lack of face-to-face interaction and stresses of independent learning presented students with mental health challenges, including increased anxiety or loneliness (Gazmararian et al., 2021). The pandemic brought many uncomfortable experiences to students, including frustration, tension, isolation, and fear (Katz et al., 2020). It was important for school leaders to be proactive in addressing mental health concerns to ensure the well-being of their students, teachers, and staff, as well as to support academic success. Research indicated that maintaining a sense of well-being could help prevent the development of mental health issues (Chambel & Curral, 2005) and serve as a buffer against stress (Serrano & Andreu, 2016). School leaders who provided a safe and supportive environment for students, teachers, and staff to discuss their mental health openly fostered a culture of openness and acceptance by promoting mental health and encouraging students to seek

help when needed. According to Pincus et al.'s (2020) study, teachers' mental health and dedication to their profession were more secure when they have greater support and independence from school leaders. School leaders could reduce mental illness stigma by addressing mental health concerns and creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone.

School leaders had a unique opportunity to play a critical role in promoting mental health and well-being and addressed these disparities by providing support and resources for their students, families, and staff. As a result, various prevention and intervention programs have been developed to promote health-protective factors and overall well-being (Sommers-Spijkerman et al., 2018). In addition, students who suffer from anxiety or depression and fail to receive support often report being unaware of available resources and services (Eisenberg et al., 2007). It was vital to encourage communication and collaboration between counselors, teachers, and administrators to ensure that students receive the support they need. School leaders should make resources available to students and parents, such as brochures and contact information for mental health services. Incorporating self-care and mental health days into the school calendar promotes the well-being of students, teachers, and staff. It ensured that the school personnel knew the importance of self-care and mental health. If considering implementing mental health or self-care days, make those days visible on the school calendar so that students, teachers, and staff could plan accordingly.

Lastly, the need for on-campus mental health counselors was vital for a school community's mental health. Mental health counselors play an important role in promoting the mental well-being of students in schools. According to Cook et al. (2019), school counselors

play a critical role in evaluating the needs and providing care to school-aged children from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade. In comprehensive school counseling programs, school counselors were trained to address students' mental health concerns and promote social-emotional wellness through preventative and developmental support (ASCA, 2019; Goodman-Scott et al., 2020). Schools were highly recommended to increase access to mental health services by hiring additional mental health counselors or partnering with community organizations to provide counseling services. By prioritizing mental health, school leaders could improve the well-being of their community and also help to mitigate the long-term effects of the pandemic on mental health.

Teacher Support

Teacher support during the pandemic was critical as the sudden shift to remote and hybrid learning has significantly impacted teachers. Initially, the sudden shift to distance learning posed challenges for teachers, including a lack of in-person relationships and community, as well as insufficient training and preparation, according to studies by Barbour and Harrison (2016), Carpenter et al. (2012), and Graham et al. (2019). This had affected teachers' mental health, increasing stress, burnout, and other concerns. School leaders needed to support teachers to help them navigate these challenges and maintain their well-being. This could include providing access to mental health resources, professional development opportunities, and a supportive work environment.

Acknowledging the unique challenges teachers face during the pandemic and providing support tailored to their needs was important. Unlike traditional online teaching methods that followed organized planning and design, remote learning shifted rapidly (Dietrich et al., 2020).

This could include providing flexible schedules, additional planning time, and resources for online teaching. By providing support specific to the challenges teachers face, school leaders could help ease the burden and reduce the stress experienced by teachers. Additionally, providing opportunities for teachers to connect and share experiences and strategies could foster community and support.

It was essential to prioritize teacher self-care and provide resources to help teachers maintain their well-being. Establishing structural support for teacher mental health would ultimately benefit everyone in the school building, including school leaders, as suggested by Will and Superville (2022). This could include access to mental health services, stress-management strategies, and resources for self-care. By promoting and supporting self-care, schools and organizations could help to reduce the risk of burnout and promote the long-term well-being of their teachers. Involving teachers in decision-making processes related to their support and well-being builds the relationship between the teachers and the administration. This could include regular check-ins and surveys to assess the needs and concerns of teachers, as well as opportunities for teachers to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement. By involving teachers in the process, the school leadership could ensure that the support provided was effective and responsive to the needs of their staff.

Providing professional development opportunities and resources could help to build the skills and knowledge needed for blended instruction. This could include training on technology, online teaching tools, and opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share best practices. Teacher support during the pandemic was crucial for students' success and teachers' well-being. Ensuring accessibility to resources and teachers' availability for academic engagement was also

crucial during the pandemic (Donnelly, 2022). By acknowledging the unique challenges teachers face, providing tailored support, promoting self-care, involving teachers in decision-making processes, and investing in professional development, school leaders help to ensure long-term success and well-being.

Student Support

The pandemic has created new challenges, many students who quickly shifted to online learning experienced demotivation, social isolation, and displacement, and some of these feelings may have been intensified by pandemic-related anxiety (Hall & Batty, 2020; Yamin, 2020). Changes in health-related behaviors and daily routines, such as increased screen time and decreased physical activity, negatively affect children's mental health (Rakickienė et al., 2021). Students who reported greater negative impacts on their mental health were more likely to attribute it to stress related to classwork, social distancing, time management, and the negative effect on their socialization with peers (Varadarajan et al., 2021). It was important for school leaders to provide support for students to help them navigate these challenges and maintain their well-being. This could include providing access to mental health resources, opportunities for social interaction, and support for academic success.

Additionally, empathy and emotional intelligence have been recognized as crucial components of emotional education, aimed at helping young people build the skills needed to manage stress and academic pressures (Schoeps et al., 2020). School leaders and organizations needed to acknowledge the unique academic challenges faced by students during the pandemic and provide support that was tailored to their needs. This could include providing additional resources for bridging the learning gap, such as intervention support and online tutoring, as well

as social and emotional support opportunities. School leaders and teachers reacclimating organization skills and time management could help reestablish routines.

Additionally, providing opportunities for students to connect and participate in school events could foster a sense of community and support and bridge the gap in social development. Withdrawal from daily activities such as attending school and socializing, along with feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear, increases the risk of developing psychiatric disorders in the future, even among those with no prior history, according to de Figueiredo et al. (2021). Providing student engagement and leadership opportunities could help build resilience, coping skills, and a sense of purpose and belonging. This could include student opportunities to participate in clubs and activities, leadership programs, and community service projects. Prioritizing student self-care and providing resources to help students maintain their well-being and reduce burnout. This could include access to mental health services, stress-management strategies, and resources for self-care.

It Takes a Village to Raise a Child

Parents to play a vital role in fostering a positive learning environment at home and providing emotional support to their children. Supportive families may be more willing to provide emotional, instrumental, and informational support during difficult times, and stable family relationships can help individuals overcome adverse life events successfully (Wong et al., 2021). Parents could boost their children's confidence and motivation by being involved in their children's education and encouraging them to set and work towards their goals. Parent-child interactions were essential to resilience as parenting plays many roles in child development, cultural transmission, and society's well-being (Bornstein, 2015). Doty et al. (2017) proposed a

“cascading resilience” model highlighting parenting as a catalyst for change. Parents provided care and protection to children during their early years of development, fostering the development of adaptive systems that individuals use to cope with challenges throughout their lives. Additionally, they pass down cultural knowledge and practices that support resilience at various levels, from individuals to societies (Masten, 2016).

Additionally, the absence of interaction and communication in their classes due to the absence of remote teaching protocols also caused frustration among students (Stewart & Lowenthal, 2021). Having open communication with teachers and being active in the school community could help parents stay informed and make informed decisions about their child's education. On the other hand, students could benefit from having a supportive network of parents, teachers, and peers. This network can provide them with guidance, encouragement, and a safe space to discuss their challenges and achievements.

A positive teacher-student relationship could foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment where students feel valued and motivated to engage in the learning process. Korpershoek et al. (2020) found that teachers' emotional support and beliefs about their competence can affect students' learning intentions. This relationship was expected to be especially significant during the COVID-19 pandemic when teachers could provide support and inspiration (Curby et al., 2013). Teachers who build strong relationships with their students could understand their needs, strengths, and weaknesses and adjust their teaching approach accordingly. This could increase student engagement, better academic performance, and important social and emotional skills development. On the contrary, students who feel disconnected from their teachers may struggle to engage in the learning process and may

experience a negative impact on their academic and personal development. To build strong teacher-student relationships, teachers must demonstrate respect, trust, and empathy toward their students and create a positive classroom culture that promotes collaboration and open communication.

Community members could foster a learning environment by engaging with children and believing in their learning abilities (Ramis & Krastina, 2010). When parents and teachers trust each other, they were more likely to work together to support student's academic and social-emotional growth and raise expectations for them. These elements, including trust, efficacy, and expectations, created a school climate that improves student achievement (Hoy et al., 2006). Regular communication between teachers and parents also helped increase student engagement, parental involvement, and student motivation (Kraft & Dougherty, 2013). Teachers who communicate openly with parents and keep them informed about their child's progress could help build trust and support. This, in turn, could lead to increased collaboration and shared responsibility for the student's education.

On the other hand, a lack of communication and collaboration between teachers and parents could result in misunderstandings, confusion, and a negative impact on the student's education. A shared sense of trust between parents, teachers, and administrators was crucial to developing conditions for student success (Forsyth et al., 2011). To build a strong teacher-parent relationship, teachers should make a concerted effort to communicate regularly and effectively and to involve parents in their child's education as much as possible.

Future Research

Future research on school experiences during the pandemic could focus on several areas, including:

1. The long-term effects of remote learning on student achievement and well-being: Studies could investigate how remote learning had impacted student academic performance, as well as their social-emotional well-being, and how these effects may persist after the pandemic ends.
2. The effectiveness of different strategies and technologies used by schools during the pandemic: Studies could investigate which strategies and technologies have been most effective in supporting student learning and well-being and how they could be replicated in the future.
3. The impact of the pandemic on students with special needs: Studies could investigate how the pandemic has impacted students with special needs and how schools could best support these students during and after the pandemic.
4. The role of school leaders during the pandemic: Studies could investigate how school leaders have navigated the challenges of the pandemic and the strategies they have used to support student learning and well-being.
5. The impact of the pandemic on school funding and resources: Studies could investigate how the pandemic had impacted school funding and resources and how schools could best support student learning and well-being in the face of these financial challenges.

6. The impact of the pandemic on school culture: Studies could investigate how the pandemic had impacted school culture and how schools could best support a positive and inclusive culture during and after the pandemic.
7. The impact of the pandemic on student-teacher relationships: Studies could investigate how the pandemic has impacted student-teacher relationships and how it has affected the learning experience for students.
8. The pandemic's impact on student motivation and engagement: Studies could investigate how the pandemic has impacted student motivation and engagement in learning and how to support and improve it.

Conclusion

The school experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic have been challenging, but they have also highlighted the school community's resilience and adaptability. The sudden shift to remote learning had created significant obstacles for schools, particularly in terms of ensuring that all students have access to the technology and resources needed for remote learning. Despite these challenges, many schools have succeeded by implementing new strategies and technologies to support students' learning and prioritizing the mental health and well-being of their students, teachers, and staff. As the world continues to navigate the ongoing pandemic, it was important to acknowledge the efforts of schools to adapt and to continue supporting their students' educational and mental health needs. It was also important to consider the lessons learned during this time and to use them to inform future policies and practices that could better support the education system during a crisis.

It was important to note that the pandemic has highlighted existing equity concerns and had shed light on the systemic educational issues that existed before the pandemic. The crisis had brought to attention the need to focus on creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students, regardless of their background. Furthermore, it had reinforced the need for ongoing professional development for teachers, as well as the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of education practices. It had also emphasized the importance of technology integration in education and the need for mental health support for students, teachers, and families. These lessons learned during the pandemic could help to inform future policies and practices that could better support the education system during crises and ensured that all students have access to quality education and mental health support.

Also, it's important to recognize the role of parents, communities, and other stakeholders in supporting schools during the pandemic. The crisis had required a collaborative effort between schools, families, and communities to ensure that students could access the resources and support they needed to continue their education. Families have played a vital role in supporting their children's learning at home, and communities have come together to provide support and resources for students and families. This experience had also demonstrated the importance of clear communication and transparent information-sharing between schools, families, and communities. This will help build trust and mutual understanding between all the stakeholders, which is essential in times of crisis. The school experiences during the pandemic have been challenging, but it also provided growth, learning, and collaboration opportunities.

APPENDIX A

Student Invitation Email

Dear Bishop John Paul Academy Seniors,

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our world, I wanted to reach out to you to discuss a research project that I am doing. As some of you may know, I am pursuing my doctoral degree at Loyola Marymount University in Educational Leadership for Social Justice. My research focuses on your educational experiences during the pandemic. I understand that the transition to remote learning has been a significant adjustment for everyone.

Despite the challenges, I commend you for your resilience and adaptability in continuing your education. I also acknowledge that remote learning may not have been as effective for some students, and I am here to support you in any way I can. I would like to hear from you to understand your experiences better and identify areas for improvement. Unfortunately, not all students can participate in my study. You must be at least eighteen years old to participate.

If you are interested in participating or for more information, please feel free to contact me via email or call me at (562) XXX-XXXX. I want to let you know that you and all the information you will provide will be highly confidential. Thank you for taking the time to read this email. Have a great day!

God Bless,

Mr. Christopher Aquino
Vice Principal of Curriculum and Instruction
Bishop John Paul Academy

APPENDIX B

Teacher Invitation Email

Dear Bishop John Paul Academy Family,

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our world, I wanted to reach out to you to discuss a research project that I am doing. As some of you may know, I am pursuing my doctoral degree at Loyola Marymount University in Educational Leadership for Social Justice. My research focuses on your educational experiences during the pandemic. I understand that the transition to remote learning has been a significant adjustment for everyone.

Despite the challenges, I commend you for your dedication and commitment to educating and supporting your students. I also acknowledge that remote teaching may not have been as effective for some students, and I am here to support you in any way I can. I would like to hear from you to understand your experiences better and identify areas for improvement.

If you are interested in participating or for more information, please feel free to contact me via email or call me at (562) XXX-XXXX. I want to let you know that you and all the information you will provide will be highly confidential. Thank you for taking the time to read this email. Have a great day!

God Bless,

Mr. Christopher Aquino
Vice Principal of Curriculum and Instruction
Bishop John Paul Academy

APPENDIX C

- 1) How would you describe your pre-pandemic life?
- 2) How would you describe your experience during remote learning?
- 3) How would you describe your experience during hybrid learning?
- 4) How would you describe your experience when you returned to campus?
- 5) How did the school support you? Can you provide examples?
- 6) What promotive factors helped you deal with the challenges during the pandemic?
- 7) What protective factors helped you deal with the challenges during the pandemic?
- 8) After your experience with the pandemic in high school, what takeaways will you bring with you to higher education?
- 9) Do you have any additional comments?

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