

Strategies, Facilitators, and Barriers in Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions: Implications for Occupational Therapy Education

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ABSTRACT

Background. Higher education was gravely affected by the pandemic which caused academic occupational disruptions and affected students. Challenges in successful engagement in occupations influence the health and well-being of the individual. Consequently, it is vital for occupational therapist (OT) educators to be informed on how to manage academic occupational disruptions to minimize its occurrence, mitigate its impact, and support students' academic occupations.

Objectives. This study aimed to determine the strategies, facilitators, and barriers in managing academic occupational disruptions encountered by Filipino OT educators.

Methods. Respondents were ninety (90) Filipino OT educators coming from the different HEIs in the Philippines offering BSOT who completed an online cross-sectional survey. A 4-point Likert-scale was used to determine the strategies, facilitators, and barriers in managing academic occupational disruptions. Descriptive statistics was used for data analysis.

Results. Respondents often ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 0.94$) utilize strategies for managing academic occupational disruptions, highlighting scheduling of synchronous and asynchronous sessions to balance online workload as the most utilized strategy. Respondents often ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.70$) encounter facilitators of managing academic occupational disruptions, citing flexibility of the school in adapting existing courses based on the context of delivery as the most common facilitator. Respondents sometimes ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 0.95$) encounter barriers to managing academic occupational disruptions, indicating need to work for income as the top barrier.

Conclusion. Despite the utilization of strategies and presence of facilitators in managing academic occupational disruptions, Filipino OT educators still encountered barriers. Psychosocial support and needs were also highlighted across strategies, facilitators, and barriers in managing academic occupational disruptions. This prompts for further sustainable development of OT competence to inform occupational therapy educators on how to minimize academic occupational disruptions, to mitigate its impact, and to support students' academic occupations.

Keywords: occupational therapy, academic occupations, psychosocial support, higher education



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INTRODUCTION

Occupational therapy is a profession that focuses on the promotion of health and well-being of individuals, groups, or populations by helping them engage in their day-to-day activities which are considered meaningful, or what we call as occupations.¹ Occupations are the central things that people do that occupy their time and in turn help in influencing the state of their health and well-being.² These occupations occur in various contexts and place varying demands on the person.

These may occur at the individual's home, at school, at work, or even in the community. By engaging in these occupations, an individual can fulfill his role as an occupational being and be healthy. However, successful engagement in these occupations is often affected by various factors, internal or external, temporary or prolonged, that impairs an individual's participation caused by occupational disruption.³

Occupational disruption can be due to a person's change of health status because of a debilitating disease, unavailability of resources to engage in occupations, or even an abrupt change in the context because of disasters. All these limits how an individual can do their meaningful activities and in turn hinder them from fulfilling their roles, and ultimately affect their health and well-being. A relevant and timely example of how occupational disruption occurs and affects the health and well-being of individuals is the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴ Higher education was among the different sectors that felt the grave impact of the pandemic which caused academic occupational disruptions and affected many students.⁵ The shifts, transitions, or cessations of everyday activities amid the pandemic has affected how students fulfill their roles, engage in academic occupations, and complete their responsibilities. Academic occupational disruptions affect the health and well-being of students which already adds to the existing problems of students in higher education even during pre-pandemic times, such as mental health concerns arising from their academic load.⁶ This stresses a need to examine the issue using an occupational lens, and to manage academic occupational disruptions to support students as we tread the new normal or post-pandemic period which can potentially improve the health and well-being of students.

OT educators are those well-equipped and better positioned to manage academic occupational disruptions to minimize its occurrence, mitigate its impact, and support students' academic occupations. However, there is limited information about what strategies are utilized, what facilitators are encountered, nor what barriers are encountered in managing academic occupational disruptions.^{5,7} At present, the importance of determining the strategies, facilitators, and barriers are of great importance as it aids in enhancing occupational therapy competence and informing occupational therapy educators to support students in the university setting in the post-pandemic period and even during challenging times.

OT Education and Disruption of Academic Occupations

Based on a survey done by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists which covered over 100 countries, occupational therapy educational programs were greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic due to disruptions of the usual ways of engaging in academic occupations, such as practice placements and other everyday activities of students.⁸ Educational programs were tasked to minimize academic occupational disruptions and to ensure that

students' educational needs are met while looking out for health concerns.

Occupational therapists can address issues of occupational disruption through occupational science concepts of doing, being, becoming, and belonging.⁵ Academic occupational disruptions range from the individual level, such as inability to access internship opportunities, and up to the population level, such as inability to congregate for extra-curricular activities. Occurrence of academic occupational disruption prompted the development of standards that promote the quality provision of occupational therapy education.⁸ Moreover, a response to this would involve determining the following: strategies for managing academic occupational disruptions, facilitators of managing academic occupational disruptions, and barriers to managing academic occupational disruptions. Identification of the strategies, facilitators, and barriers would be of significance to heads of occupational therapy educational programs, occupational therapist educators, and occupational therapy students as it would be sustainable means in managing academic occupational disruptions at present and in the future.

Strategies are vital in the management of academic occupational disruptions. In this study, we define *strategies* as the approaches or interventions that Filipino OT educators can utilize to minimize the occurrence of disruptions or mitigate its impact, and support students' engagement in academic occupations. The initial response to occupational disruption is to establish or re-establish lost routines.⁹ OT educators can establish routines for productivity-related activities and other non-academic tasks. Moreover, achieving a balance between synchronous tasks, asynchronous tasks, and delineation of non-productivity tasks can be part of routine building.¹⁰ In cases of emergencies, educators can adapt existing courses and teaching strategies to fit the virtual context¹¹ by utilizing problem-based case study work, video assessments, and in-depth reflective practice.¹²⁻¹⁴ Applications can help supplement learning in the virtual context and can stand in place for physical equipment or models that are inaccessible.¹⁵ This can be another strategy that can be used to manage academic occupational disruptions. In addition, the provision of avenues for communication and exchange, such as forums, can help people continue to connect despite physical or geographical restrictions.¹⁶ This strategy can also be adopted in the academic community and will aid in the continuity of educator and student relationships established in the traditional classroom setting.¹⁷ Likewise, utilization of such platforms to provide support for mental health can be another useful strategy to address the impacts of academic occupational disruption.¹⁸⁻²⁰

It is also important to note the facilitators that complement the utilized strategies in managing academic occupational disruptions. In this study, we define *facilitators* as factors experienced that can mitigate the impact of academic occupational disruptions and can support students' engagement in academic occupations. In literature, it was

highlighted by those in the academe who were affected by the restrictions of COVID-19 that the easiness of use and flexibility of the school's learning management system (LMS) aided in the successful engagement in their academic-related tasks.^{12,18,21} The LMS will be the primary means of exchange and engagement when physical restrictions occur. In addition, an effective line of communication within the school's system will further aid in engagement of academic-related tasks and social support among educators and students alike.^{18,22,23} Another possible facilitator would be the availability of psychosocial support from the school, peers and family members as these were noted to have a positive impact on the well-being among those affected by the restrictions of the pandemic.^{23,24} Moreover, opportunities to engage in activities outside the confines of one's house aided in mitigating the negative impacts of the physical limitations and travel restrictions in place.⁵

Given the abruptness of the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions encountered barriers when it came to maintaining curricular and extracurricular activities.^{5,19,25} In this study, we define *barriers* as the factors encountered that can hinder management of academic occupational disruption or affect successful engagement in academic occupations. The increased time allotted for completing tasks online using electronic devices caused physical strain.²⁶ Incapability due to physical strain can greatly affect how an individual successfully engages in their occupations and can be a barrier. Moreover, internet connectivity issues and access to a compatible electronic device can be a barrier since engagement in academic occupations is dependent on both.^{25,27} Shifting to remote learning demanded educator skills to deliver course contents in a context different from the traditional classroom set-up and can be considered a barrier in managing academic occupational disruptions.^{10,11,25} Due to the nature of online or remote learning, individuals feel isolated. This feeling of isolation contributes to existing psychosocial problems and can be a barrier in managing academic occupational disruptions.^{5,18,19,28-31} Occupational therapists working in the academe are reported to have lesser income than their counterparts working in the clinics.³² Moreover, the closure of schools caused loss of employment among teachers³³ and would prompt many to find sources of extra income which can be another barrier to managing academic occupational disruptions.

OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to address the following research objectives:

1. Determine the strategies for managing academic occupational disruptions used by Filipino OT educators.
2. Determine the facilitators of managing academic occupational disruptions encountered by Filipino OT educators.

3. Determine the barriers to managing academic occupational disruptions encountered by Filipino OT educators.

METHODS

Research Design

This study adopted a postpositivist worldview following the quantitative research approach.³⁴ This approach was suitable for the study since it enabled the researchers to measure variables of interest in this study which are: (a) strategies for managing academic occupational disruption, (b) facilitators of managing academic occupational disruptions, and (c) barriers to managing academic occupational disruptions. The survey design helped measure how often the strategies were utilized, how often facilitators were experienced, and how often barriers were encountered. Moreover, a cross-sectional design was deemed appropriate and convenient to gather data about the variables limited to a set period.³⁵ At the time the survey was conducted, it was already two years into the pandemic and all classes in HEIs offering BSOT were already ongoing.^{34,35}

Population and Sampling

The study focused on Filipino OT educators in different higher education institutions (HEI) offering the degree Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy in the Philippines. Currently, there are one hundred seventy (170) Filipino occupational therapists coming from the different higher education institutions.³⁶

In this study, a total of ninety (90) responses were gathered. Purposive sampling was used as it enabled the researcher to select the best respondents based on a set of criteria relevant to the research problem. The following criteria was used in selecting the respondents: (1) a licensed Filipino OT practicing as an educator in the Philippines, (2) teaching in a HEI that has a CHED accredited Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy program, and (3) handling occupational therapy students and interns amid the COVID-19 pandemic period within the past two school years. The respondents were recruited through the program heads of different HEIs, and through dissemination by the Philippine Academy of Occupational Therapists, Inc. The response rate may be attributed to the following: individual follow-ups can't be made to the personal emails of potential respondents since announcement of the was done through blast emails by the respective program heads; one higher education institution's BSOT program is already non-operational at the time the survey was distributed; and one HEI did not respond to the request to participate in the study.

Instrument

A survey questionnaire developed by the authors entitled, 'Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions' (Appendix) was utilized for collecting data pertaining to the strategies

for managing academic occupational disruptions, facilitators of managing academic occupational disruptions, and barriers to managing academic occupational disruption.

A review of relevant literature was conducted as the basis for creating the items in the questionnaire. The contents of the questionnaire were based on the concepts of occupational disruption in the scoping review by Nizzero et al.³, concepts of academic occupation by Keptner and McCarthy⁵, and the role of occupational therapists in universities^{6,7}. The questionnaire has 11 items divided into four sections that correspond to the following: 1) Demographic and Academic Characteristics, 2) Strategies for Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions, 3) Facilitators of Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions, and 4) Barriers to Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions.

The Demographics and Academic Characteristics section was based on the study of Cabatan et al.³⁶ about the Philippine academic workforce. There are five nominal items in this section that asks about demographic characteristics (age, sex, civil status) and academic characteristics (highest educational degree, OT school of employment). This section served as a means for profiling the respondents.

The Strategies for Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions section contained ten 4-point Likert scale items (Never, Sometimes, Often, Always) that asked how frequent the OT educator utilized the mentioned strategies in managing academic occupational disruptions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. One open-ended question asked for additional strategies or interventions from the respondent. Items in this section were constructed based on relevant literature on how occupational therapists support engagement in occupations, how occupational therapists support students in the university setting, and how health professions educators supported their students amid challenging times.

The Facilitators of Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions section contained ten 4-point Likert scale items (Never, Sometimes, Often, Always) that asks how frequent the OT educator encountered the mentioned indicators as facilitators of managing disruptions of academic occupations amid the COVID-19 pandemic. One open-ended question asked for additional facilitators from the respondent. Items in this section were constructed based on relevant literature on what factors helped promote successful engagement occupations based on occupational science principles, and what factors supported health professions educators and students in engaging in their academic occupations.

The Barriers to Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions section contained thirteen 4-point Likert scale items (Never, Sometimes, Often, Always) that asked how frequent the OT educator experienced the mentioned barriers in managing disruptions of academic occupations amid the COVID-19 pandemic. One open-ended question asked for additional barriers from the respondent. Items in this section were constructed based on relevant literature on what factors hindered educators and students to complete academic-

related tasks when experiencing challenging times, and what factors affected medical students' participation in the academe. The choice for using frequency as a means of measuring the variables in this study echoed the method utilized in a local study about the barriers to learning experienced by medical students.²⁶

For validation of the questionnaire, it was shown to experts in occupational therapy education for their comments, suggestions, and review for face validity. Pilot testing of the questionnaire was then conducted among 20 OT educators in Metro Cebu who fit the inclusion criteria of this study. Those who joined the pilot test were excluded in the actual study. Results of the pilot test yielded acceptable reliability based on its Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.703$).

Data Collection

Links to the survey were provided to program heads of the different HEIs for them to distribute to the members of the faculty. Also, assistance was sought from the Philippine Academy of Occupational Therapists, Inc. (PAOT) for dissemination of the online survey through social media posting, and individual member emails. Survey links were also posted on social media (Facebook and Instagram) to ensure maximal response rates. Responses were collected through Google Forms (Google LLC, California). Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary.

The survey was open to responses from November 22, 2022 to December 16, 2022. This provided ample time for the respondents to complete the survey. Follow-up emails were sent to the respective program heads every week to encourage maximal participation.

Data Analysis

All entries from the ninety (90) respondents were checked and verified by the first author to have complete entries prior to analysis. There were no duplicates, and all entries have all items completed. De-identified data was analyzed on SPSS using descriptive statistics. Frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe the respondents' profile in terms of age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, and location. Weighted mean was used to describe the a) strategies for managing academic occupational disruption b) facilitators in managing academic occupational disruption c) barriers in managing academic occupational disruption. Content analysis was used for the open-ended questions to determine if there were redundancy with the responses provided by the respondents and whether there were additional indicators aside from those mentioned in the questionnaire.

Ethical Considerations

Approval of the study was given by the Velez College Ethics Review Committee (VCERC-2022-NON-003). Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Respondents may end the survey at any point. By answering the survey, the

respondents consent to providing their personal information to the researchers. Prior the survey proper, an introductory page on the form will explain the study and ask for the respondent's consent. If the respondent consents, the form will proceed to the survey proper. Anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents were ensured by the exclusion of any personal identifiers.

RESULTS

Sociodemographic Profile of Filipino OT Educators

Table 1 summarizes the sociodemographic profile of the respondents. This describes their characteristics such as age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, and location.

From the survey, majority (66.7%) of occupational therapist educators belong to the 26-35 years old age range. In terms of gender, occupational therapy educators are predominantly female (75.6%). In terms of civil status, majority (77.8%) of Filipino occupational therapist educators are single which could possibly be attributed to their age range. In terms of educational attainment, more than half (66.7%) of Filipino occupational therapist educators are still at the bachelor's level. In terms of the geographic location of where the Filipino occupational therapist educators are affiliated, majority are concentrated in Visayas (54.4%) and Luzon (40.0%). A possibility why there is a higher percentage of respondents from the Visayas may be attributed to the primary author's area of affiliation.

Strategies Used by Occupational Therapy Educators in Addressing Academic Occupational Disruptions

Table 2 presents the weighted means, verbal interpretation, and rank of each strategy used.

As shown in Table 2, among the different strategies utilized by Filipino occupational therapist educators, the scheduling of synchronous and asynchronous sessions to balance online workload was always used in addressing disruptions of their students' academic occupations. This strategy ranked first among the ten identified strategies which were also often used. It is also important to note that the provision of psychosocial support came out as third among all strategies used and this, in particular, pertains to personal factors in contrast to the first two strategies which involves modifications with the occupation and performance patterns, namely the scheduling of synchronous/asynchronous sessions, and routines respectively. Overall, Filipino OT educators often use the identified strategies to address disruptions of academic occupations.

Analysis of free-text responses for additional strategies not mentioned in the survey yielded one new significant information. Due to the adoption of the hybrid set-up for classes which will be here to stay, a suggested strategy to address disruptions in academic occupations would be to

revisit and enhance academic policies to cover online or virtual academic workload. Rehashing of course outcomes fit to the mix of onsite and online or virtual delivery and assessment method would match expectations on both the students' and educators' end. Establishing these policies would help keep both students and educators on track and minimize disruptions. All other responses highlight the services for mental health ("Provision of psychosocial support for students and teachers") and creating a space for academic occupations ("Establish a routine or schedule; Assuming a student role during class hours; No household chores during class hours").

Facilitators Experienced by Occupational Therapist Educators in Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions

Table 3 presents the weighted means, verbal interpretation, and rank of each facilitator.

Among the identified facilitators for managing disruptions of academic occupations, the flexibility of the school in adapting existing courses and the ease of use of the school's learning management system were always highlighted as facilitators. The next indicator seen as a facilitator was the availability of school support which focuses on the psychosocial support services provided by the school. This facilitator is also congruent with the findings on the strategies discussed in the previous section. Overall, the indicators above are often seen by Filipino occupational therapist educators as facilitators in managing academic occupational disruptions.

Analysis of free-text responses for additional facilitators not mentioned in the survey yielded no new significant information. All of the responses fall under the category of

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents (N = 90)

Profile Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
25 years old and below	18	20.0
26-35 years old	60	66.7
36-45 years old	7	7.8
46 years old and above	5	5.6
Gender		
Male	22	24.4
Female	68	75.6
Civil Status		
Single or never married	70	77.8
Married or partnered in long-term relationship	20	22.2
Separated or widowed	0	0.0
Highest Educational Attainment		
BSOT	60	66.7
MA/MS in OT	17	18.9
MA/MS in another discipline	10	11.1
Phd/EdD/ScD	2	2.2
Clinical Doctorate	1	1.1
Location		
Luzon	36	40.0
Visayas	49	54.4
Mindanao	5	5.6

Table 2. Strategies for Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions

Indicators	Weighted Mean (SD)	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Scheduling synchronous and asynchronous sessions to balance online workload	3.41 (0.72)	Always	1
2. Creating a routine to follow for specific occupations (i.e., having meals on dedicated break times before proceeding to another school-related task)	3.18 (0.91)	Often	2
3. Providing psychosocial support to address student and/or faculty concerns	3.13 (0.71)	Often	3
4. Creating a separate workspace for teaching-learning at home (i.e., setting up an isolated space solely for classwork)	3.07 (0.91)	Often	4
5. Maintaining delineations of personal, school, and work tasks (i.e., keeping a schedule when to respond to school-related messages)	2.99 (0.85)	Often	5
6. Using a blended approach in learning (i.e., setting days where students and faculty report for in-campus activities)	2.81 (1.16)	Often	6
7. Providing pre-recorded lectures on video sharing platforms	2.77 (1.14)	Often	7
8. Using applications as course materials to supplement student learning (i.e., use of Complete Anatomy application etc.)	2.73 (0.85)	Often	8
9. Organizing discussion (asynchronous) forums for students	2.72 (0.95)	Often	9
10. Organizing online 'Kamustahan' sessions where you and students can send regards and ask about their condition	2.66 (0.85)	Often	10
Overall Weighted Mean	2.95 (0.94)	Often	

Legend: Never (1.00 - 1.74), Sometimes (1.75 - 2.49), Often (2.50 - 3.24), Always (3.25 - 4.00)

Table 3. Facilitators of Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions

Indicators	Weighted Mean (SD)	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Flexibility of the school in adapting existing courses to fit the prevailing conditions.	3.12 (0.60)	Always	1.5
2. Ease of use of the school's learning management system	3.12 (0.62)	Always	1.5
3. Availability of school support services for students and faculty (i.e., psychosocial support services)	3.09 (0.83)	Often	3
4. Effective lines of communication within the school's infrastructure	3.08 (0.75)	Often	4
5. Adaptability of course materials for teaching-learning in a different context aside from the traditional classroom-based setting.	3.04 (0.63)	Often	5
6. Availability of alternatives for holding school-related programs or activities (i.e., webinars for enrichment, online student socials)	3.02 (0.69)	Often	6
7. Less restrictions on engaging in occupations outside the school context (i.e., taking a walk, leisure activities)	2.98 (0.62)	Often	7
8. Availability of social support for students (i.e., at home, peers etc.)	2.94 (0.74)	Often	8.5
9. Ease of maintaining occupational balance amid the prevailing conditions	2.94 (0.62)	Often	8.5
10. Availability of materials to supplement school-related experiences (i.e., 3D anatomy applications, subscriptions for productivity applications)	2.70 (0.71)	Often	10
Overall Weighted Mean	3.00 (0.70)	Often	

Legend: Never (1.00 - 1.74), Sometimes (1.75 - 2.49), Often (2.50 - 3.24), Always (3.25 - 4.00)

environmental supports (“ease of use of the school’s learning management system”).

Barriers Encountered by Occupational Therapist Educators in Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions

Table 4 presents the weighted means, verbal interpretation, and rank of each barrier.

Among the thirteen identified barriers to managing disruptions of academic occupations, the need to work for extra income and the need to fulfill responsibilities at home

were often encountered by Filipino occupational therapist educators as barriers, ranking as the first and second barrier, respectively. The access to gadgets such as cellphones and computers, and lack of basic needs were never encountered as barriers by Filipino OT educators. The remaining barriers were noted to be encountered sometimes. Overall, Filipino OT educators sometimes encounter barriers to managing academic occupational disruptions.

Analysis of free-text responses for additional barriers not mentioned in the survey yielded no new significant information. All of the responses fall under either the

Table 4. Barriers to Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions

Indicators	Weighted Mean (SD)	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Need to work for extra income	2.82 (1.13)	Often	1
2. Need to fulfill responsibilities at home	2.79 (0.98)	Often	2
3. Mental health difficulties (e.g., stress, anxiety and feelings of uncertainty)	2.63 (0.83)	Often	3
4. Physical incapability to study/teach subjects online (e.g., eye strain, headache)	2.42 (0.78)	Sometimes	4.5
5. Lack of teachers' resources and skills necessary to teach our courses online	2.42 (0.79)	Sometimes	4.5
6. Unreliable or no internet access (e.g., power interruption)	2.26 (0.89)	Sometimes	6
7. Limited space conducive for studying/teaching	2.23 (0.95)	Sometimes	7
8. Inability to adjust learning style (e.g., poor time management, lack of discipline)	2.14 (0.71)	Sometimes	8
9. Incapability of school's infrastructure and resources to support online teaching	2.10 (0.74)	Sometimes	9
10. Difficulty in communication or lack of clear direction from educators and/or peers	2.06 (0.84)	Sometimes	10
11. Lack of technical skills (e.g., difficulty using word processing programs for school assignments, difficulty using teleconferencing apps for synchronous sessions)	1.90 (0.75)	Sometimes	11
12. No smartphone or computer, or limited access due to gadget sharing with others	1.46 (0.78)	Never	12
13. Lack of basic needs (i.e., food, water, medicine and security)	1.19 (0.49)	Never	13
Overall Weighted Mean	2.19 (0.95)	Sometimes	

Legend: Never (1.00 - 1.74), Sometimes (1.75 - 2.49), Often (2.50 - 3.24), Always (3.25 - 4.00)

category of resources for online learning (“inadequacy of online activities”) or space for conducive studying/teaching (“family members can easily call on us”).

DISCUSSION

The results of the survey determined the strategies for managing academic occupational disruptions, facilitators of managing academic occupational disruptions, and barriers to managing academic occupational disruptions. These can aid OT educators to minimize the occurrence of academic occupational disruptions, mitigate its impact, and support students' academic occupations.

Filipino OT educators served as the respondents in this study as they are primarily responsible for managing academic occupational disruptions. Majority were females and belonged to the 26-35 years old age range which is closely similar to the 2017 workforce survey by the Philippine Academy of Occupational Therapists.³² It can be inferred that Filipino OT educators are fairly young which resembles local³⁶ and international³⁷ literature about the occupational therapy academic workforce. The Commission on Higher Education³⁸ required faculty in the Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy program to have at least a master's degree. However, more than half of Filipino OT educators are still at the bachelor's level. Leniency in this requirement might be due to the limited number of available OTs in the academe.³² This can also be an indicator that the current occupational therapy academic workforce are still in the early stages of their careers. Leaders in HEIs are called to reinforce supports needed by OT educators to enhance work skills in academia given that majority are early career educators.³⁹

Strategies highlighted in the results address academic occupational disruptions by maximizing the benefits of the virtual context since academic occupations are now done in a blend of traditional onsite and online sessions. Hence, scheduling of synchronous and asynchronous sessions to balance academic workload emerged as the strategy most often used as it was also done by other health professions educators and students according to literature.^{26,40} Balance of occupations helped individuals in academia cope and minimize the constraints of COVID-19 as it allowed them enough time to engage in their occupations.²⁸ Educators and students are prompted to effectively manage synchronous and asynchronous academic workload as this set-up minimizes academic occupational disruptions should they occur in the future.⁵ The blend of onsite and online sessions is currently adopted by HEIs across the Philippines and is most likely to stay. Students preferred that their schools integrate this method of delivering classes post-pandemic.⁴¹ However, it is also established that the set-up of having some elements of academic workload online also has implications on an individual's mental health and wellbeing.^{18,19,42,43} Hence, provision of psychosocial support for educators and students emerged as one of the top used strategies. Occupational therapists can be providers of mental health and psychosocial support services in universities based on a scoping review.⁷ However, there were no such practices documented in the Philippines despite the indication in this study's survey results that it can be a strategy to managing academic occupational disruptions. It can be inferred that there is a need to formalize programs involving occupational therapists in student support services. In addition, occupational therapists can provide psychosocial support services that enhance existing

campus collaboration for counselling for the general student population, mental health advocacy based on successful engagement in academic occupations.⁷

Facilitators highlighted in the results mitigate the impact of academic occupational disruptions by complementing the blend of virtual activities with traditional classroom-based activities. Hence, adaptability of existing courses to the virtual context was highlighted as the top facilitator. According to literature, the adaptability of courses can ensure attainment of students' learning outcomes while maximizing advantages of both onsite occupations and virtual occupations.^{44,45} However, the availability of virtual applications to supplement school-related occupations was the least experienced facilitator. This contrasts with existing literature stating that applications such as 3D anatomy enhance the experiences of students in online courses amid the pandemic.¹⁵ This facilitator's low rank among the others may be attributed to the cost of procuring such applications or educators may have opted to do skills-based learning activities entirely onsite. Another common facilitator encountered was the school's LMS as it affects educators' and students' access to materials needed to fully engage in academic occupations. According to literature, ease of navigating the LMS can contribute to a positive virtual experience and increase the confidence among its users.^{18,44} Similar to the strategies mentioned above, the availability of psychosocial support as part of the school's services was also one of the top facilitators of managing academic occupational disruptions. The availability of psychosocial support for educators and students as a facilitator is supported by literature indicating that the pandemic heightened the need for it in HEIs.¹¹ In addition, it is also established that support for mental health facilitates a positive academic experience on both the students and educators.^{30,40,46}

Barriers highlighted in the results were economic and personal health-related factors associated with the pandemic that hindered the OT educators in managing academic occupational disruptions. Hence, the need to work for extra income was the top barrier often encountered by OT educators. This can be justified with the existing salary structure for OTs working in the university setting. On average, the Filipino OT educator earns roughly ₱30,000.00 a month which pales in comparison to the monthly average of ₱60,000.00 earned by OTs working in the clinics.³² Moreover, the pandemic also had economic impacts on the Filipino households which greatly affected the income of many.⁴⁷ Given the prevailing conditions and the 'still recovering' economic landscape of the Philippines, this pushed many professionals, OT educators included, to look for additional means of income. Another barrier was the need to fulfill responsibilities at home and this may be attributed to instances wherein there are other members in the family who are sick,^{48,49} which would mean added responsibilities to the OT educator at home. Mental health difficulties as the third top barrier to managing academic occupational disruptions is consistent with the strategies and facilitators highlighted

in the previous sections. Mental health difficulties have also been stressed across literature among educators and students across different fields.^{5,42,50,51} Given that engaging in academic occupations may already be challenging as someone in health professions education field, this puts forth a need to highlight psychosocial issues as a barrier that needs to be addressed alongside the adaptations of schoolwork, and modifications of established routines.^{6,19,52}

As the relevance for psychosocial support and mental health was highlighted in the management of disruptions of academic occupations, it is important for occupational therapists to look into how they can augment existing student support systems in their respective institutions. Occupational therapist educators can practice mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) which is a multi-layered system of supports that works with the interconnectedness of various professionals from different fields to protect and promote the psychosocial well-being of those affected.^{53,54} By supporting the mental health of students in the university setting, occupational therapists can potentially have a positive impact in the engagement of students in their academic occupations.⁵⁵

Limitations

This study may be subject to selection bias wherein respondents who have an electronic gadget with an active internet connection can complete the survey. This was addressed by informing the respondents and program heads to contact the primary author should they encounter difficulties in completing the survey. An option to complete a pen-and-paper version of the survey to be mailed was made available. This bias may have led to an underestimate in the "No smartphone or computer" as a barrier to managing academic occupational disruptions. Further, self-report bias may have influenced the responses to the survey. The use of a self-developed tool in the study may also be another limitation, as there is limited literature about managing academic occupational disruptions available. To address this, experts in the field of occupational therapy and education conducted face validity of the tool, and internal reliability was also tested. This study is limited to the responses of OT educators in the management of academic occupational disruptions in the context of a pandemic and excluded the perspectives of their students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: Filipino OT educators often utilized strategies for managing academic occupational disruptions and the scheduling of synchronous and asynchronous tasks was the most utilized strategy. Filipino OT educators often experienced facilitators of managing academic occupational disruptions and the school's flexibility and ease of use of the LMS were the most experienced facilitators. Filipino OT educators sometimes encountered barriers to managing

academic occupational disruption and the need to work for extra income was the topmost barrier.

The result of this survey prompts various leaders in HEIs to facilitate discussion amongst their colleagues to assist in debriefing of both online and onsite academic-related tasks, and to communicate with other school offices to provide psychosocial support services for both faculty and students. Psychosocial support and needs were also highlighted across strategies, facilitators, and barriers in managing academic occupational disruptions. Mental health and wellbeing are concerns that were amplified amid the pandemic and will continue to be felt even as we emerge from the restrictions placed from the pandemic. OT educational program chairs are also encouraged to continue sustainable future development of OT competence to inform OT educators how to minimize academic occupational disruptions, to mitigate its impact, and to support students' academic occupations.

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Statement of Authorship

Both authors certified fulfillment of ICMJE authorship criteria.

Author Disclosure

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APPENDIX

Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions Questionnaire

This is a survey about managing academic occupational disruptions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this study will determine the strategies of occupational therapist educators in supporting their students' academic occupations amid the pandemic, determine the facilitators and barriers for academic occupations amid the pandemic. More so, this will be the basis for the development of a web-based resource network for occupational therapist educators to facilitate exchange of ideas and best practices.

Academic occupations are the occupations that students actively engage in throughout their day that may pertain to, but are not limited to, education, social participation, leisure, and spiritual occupations (Keptner & McCarthy, 2020).

The survey is open to all Filipino occupational therapy educators in the Philippines, whose classes and/or clinical rotations have been disrupted due to COVID-19. The entire survey will only take 5 to 10 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is voluntary. You may end the survey at any point. By answering the survey, you consent to providing your personal information to the study investigators. The researcher will maintain the confidentiality of data and all data will be de-identified prior to analysis.

For questions, or if you wish to withdraw your response, you may email the primary investigator. Thank you in advance for your participation! By agreeing to the terms of the study, kindly provide the following information.

Demographic and Academic Characteristics

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary
 - Prefer not to say
3. What best describes your civil status?
 - Single or never married
 - Married or partnered in a long-term relationship
 - Separated or widowed
4. What is your highest educational degree?
 - BSOT
 - MA/MS in OT
 - MA/MS in another discipline
 - PhD/EdD/ScD
 - Clinical Doctorate
5. In which occupational therapy school are you currently enrolled?
(Dropdown list of occupational therapy schools in the Philippines)

Strategies in Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions

6. The following may be considered strategies to managing disruptions of academic occupations. For each item, indicate how often YOU have utilized these strategies to managing disruptions of academic occupations amid the pandemic.*

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Scheduling synchronous and asynchronous sessions to balance online workload				
Providing psychosocial support to address student and/or faculty concerns				
Providing pre-recorded lectures on video sharing platforms				
Using applications as course materials to supplement student learning (i.e., use of Complete Anatomy application etc.)				
Using a blended approach in learning (i.e., setting days where students and faculty report for in-campus activities)				
Organizing online 'Kamustahan' sessions where you and students can send regards and ask about their condition				
Organizing discussion (asynchronous) forums for students				
Maintaining delineations of personal, school, and work tasks (i.e., keeping a schedule when to respond to school-related messages)				
Creating a separate workspace for teaching-learning at home (i.e., setting up an isolated space solely for classwork)				
Creating a routine to follow for specific occupations (i.e., having meals on dedicated break times before proceeding to another school-related task)				

Managing Disruptions of Academic Occupations

7. What other strategies, programs or interventions would you suggest to your occupational therapy school to help you manage the disruptions of academic occupations of your students and to maximize their learning during this pandemic period and prepare adequately for the next academic year?

Facilitators to Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions

8. The following may be considered facilitators to managing disruptions of academic occupations. For each item, indicate how often YOU have encountered these facilitators while managing disruptions of academic occupations amid the pandemic.*

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Flexibility of the school in adapting existing courses to fit the prevailing conditions.				
Ease of use of the school's learning management system				
Availability of materials to supplement school-related experiences (i.e., 3D anatomy applications, subscriptions for productivity applications)				
Adaptability of course materials for teaching-learning in a different context aside from the traditional classroom-based setting.				
Availability of alternatives for holding school-related programs or activities (i.e., webinars for enrichment, online student socials)				
Availability of school support services for students and faculty (i.e., psychosocial support services)				
Effective lines of communication within the school's infrastructure				
Availability of social support for students (i.e., at home, peers etc.)				
Ease of maintaining occupational balance amid the prevailing conditions				
Less restrictions on engaging in occupations outside the school context (i.e., taking a walk, leisure activities)				

9. If there are other facilitators that you currently experience or have encountered, please enumerate them here:

Barriers to Managing Academic Occupational Disruptions

10. The following may be considered perceived barriers to managing disruptions of academic occupations. For each item, indicate how often YOU have encountered these problems while managing disruptions of academic occupations amid the pandemic.*

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Physical incapability to study/teach subjects online (e.g., eye strain, headache)				
Mental health difficulties (e.g., stress, anxiety and feelings of uncertainty)				
Lack of teachers' resources and skills necessary to teach our courses online				
Incapability of school's infrastructure and resources to support online teaching				
Inability to adjust learning style (e.g., poor time management, lack of discipline)				
Need to fulfill responsibilities at home				
Lack of technical skills (e.g., difficulty using word processing programs for school assignments, difficulty using teleconferencing apps for synchronous sessions)				
Difficulty in communication or lack of clear direction from educators and/or peers				
Limited space conducive for studying/teaching				
Unreliable or no internet access (e.g., power interruption)				
No smartphone or computer, or limited access due to gadget sharing with others				
Need to work for extra income				
Lack of basic needs (i.e., food, water, medicine and security)				

11. If there are other barriers that you currently experience or have experienced, please enumerate them here: