Understanding the Phenomenon of Webinar Fatigue as Experienced by Filipino Professional Teachers

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Abstract

Webinar fatigue is a unique and contemporary phenomenon that warrants further understanding. This study examined the experiences of 39 Filipino professional teachers who reportedly experienced webinar fatigue. The five lifeworld existentials of van Manen—lived body, lived time, lived space, lived materiality, and lived relation—served as the study’s interpretive hermeneutic phenomenological framework for exploring the phenomenon. The study employed interpretive analysis, which revealed three critical points for understanding webinar fatigue. The first point is that webinar fatigue disrupts multiple well-being dimensions, such as the physical, emotional, mental, social, and financial, leading to adverse consequences in work, social interaction, lifestyle management, and learning retention and satisfaction. This idea suggests that despite webinars’ advantages, they can be detrimental if they cause fatigue. The second point is that webinar fatigue is a multifactorial condition where different technological, personal, environmental, and process factors contribute to its development. The third point is that webinar fatigue has its subjective interpretation—personal meaning, which in this study is revealed as a form of sacrifice for survival and competitive advantage in the present educational system and beyond. Numerous recommendations can be derived from the findings. A unique assessment of webinar fatigue is necessary, as the causes and effects of webinar fatigue are multifaceted and interdependent. The webinar facilitators and organizers must carefully select, organize, and schedule content topics that suit the participants’ needs, motivations, and situations. Academic leaders and practitioners must set control mechanisms to ensure systematic participation in webinars and avoid overtraining.

Keywords: Professional Training, Remote Work, Teachers, Videoconference, Webinar Fatigue

1. Introduction

As the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions ease, face-to-face interactions are taking a backseat, and virtual or digital engagements are becoming more significant in work and personal life. The problem,
however, is that many professionals scrambled to navigate the unfamiliarity of virtual and technology-driven interactions, which caused stress and burnout (Tanucan et al., 2022a). Many also reported that their prolonged engagement and training with videoconferences or webinars had strained them (Fosslien & Duffy, 2020; Isa, 2020; Sen, 2020; White, 2020). As one of the most widely affected professionals, teachers mostly felt this dire situation. There is growing evidence that webinars have negative physical and psychological consequences (Nesher Shoshan & Wehrt, 2021; Oducado et al., 2022b). It has also been noted that attending webinars is more psychologically demanding (Tanucan & Uytico, 2021) since it requires greater concentration during video calls (Williams, 2021), compounded with the increased pressure to respond and perform during an interactive session (Sharma et al., 2021). Nadler (2020) also argued that the feeling of exhaustion in webinars might not merely be caused by looking at a computer screen but by the intricacy of the interpersonal relationships brought by the unique spatial dynamics of video conferencing. These reported feelings of exhaustion and stress attributed to webinars manifest the term “webinar fatigue,” which is similarly termed as “Zoom fatigue” and “Zoom exhaustion” (Wiederhold, 2020).

Webinar fatigue has been defined differently by various professionals, having the same expression that broadly states the oversaturation in webinar participation, leading to suffering (Sen, 2020), uncomfortability (Fosslien & Duffy, 2020), tiredness or exhaustion (Isa, 2020; Lugtu, 2020), and a lack of interest (White, 2020). While such expressions were not based on scientific exploration, they show that webinar fatigue has attributes that cohere with the classic definition of fatigue—“extreme and persistent tiredness, weakness, or exhaustion” (Dittner et al., 2004). Understanding the cause of webinar fatigue could be done using the self-motivation theory, which cites the performance of demanding tasks for a prolonged time to increase relatedness and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). One example is when an employee does overnight work to feel a sense of belonging with their performing peers (relatedness) or when a teacher attends various webinars to become more effective (competence). Other theories, like the Differential Susceptibility of the Media Effects Model (DSMM), may also explain webinar fatigue, citing that media effects depend on people’s characteristics. DSMM explains that the cause of videoconference fatigue is influenced by general individual socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, race, and ethnicity, including personality traits (Valkenburg, 2013). Fauville et al. (2021) also supported this assumption, whose findings showed how socio-demographic factors and personality characteristics were significantly associated with Zoom fatigue.

Webinar fatigue is an emerging phenomenon. It emerged in the collective vocabulary during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many professionals began working remotely and experienced the feeling of being drained after a series of video conference participations (Nardi, 2020). While it belongs to the general idea of fatigue, it has different configurations from other fatigue-related constructs, such as work fatigue and compassion fatigue (Bennett et al., 2021). The former broadly refers to end-of-workday fatigue (Winwood et al., 2005) due to work and non-work demands, such as job overload and home responsibilities (Irawanto et al., 2021). The latter refers to occupational stress due to cumulative and prolonged exposure to suffering and trauma (Joinson, 1992). On the surface, both definitions present similar characteristics to webinar fatigue in terms of work and non-work demands (work fatigue) and cumulative and prolonged exposure (compassion fatigue). However, newer technological platforms may otherwise influence the development of webinar fatigue, such as the concepts of “techno-stress” and “tech invasion.”

Both techno-stress and tech invasion highly emphasize several causes of technology-related stress, such as technical glitches and complexities (Ayyagari et al., 2011; Owusu-Ansah, 2016), as well as their adverse effects, such as low performance and productivity, mental pressure, a sense of anxiety, and pessimism (Ayyagari et al., 2011; Owusu-Ansah, 2016). The idea of techno-stress and tech invasion is a vital component of the Technology Acceptance Model, which explains that a person’s adoption of new technology depends on how they perceive the usefulness and usability of the technology (Davis, 1989). This idea means that when a person is unfamiliar with the technology, including its usefulness, there is a greater possibility of repulsion. With the abrupt utilization of
webinars as a form of professional training, professionals have been forced to adopt and utilize various videoconference platforms, resulting in stress and pressure (Oksanen et al., 2021). Complex technical features significantly impact people’s stress when using emerging technology (da Silva Cezar & Maçada, 2021; Joo et al., 2018).

The studies above pointed out that webinar fatigue contains distinct antecedents beyond technology-related stress and other fatigue-related constructs; thus, making it a uniquely contemporary phenomenon that warrants further understanding. As fatigue per se inflicts significant, long-term socioeconomic consequences, which include the loss of work hours and employment, webinar fatigue connotes considerable attention despite the contention that it is non-lethal (Lugtu, 2020). Grounded on the idea that fatigue may differ from professional to professional—say, fatigue for information and communications technology (ICT) professionals varies from the fatigue experienced by teachers—further investigations focusing on a specific field are essential to understanding fatigue. Research on webinar fatigue is scarce (Nesher Shoshan & Wehrt, 2021), and further studies are warranted, particularly among Filipino professional teachers. As webinars have become increasingly popular nowadays, so is webinar fatigue. A better grasp of this phenomenon is critical since understanding precedes proper prevention, management, and coping strategies.

This study sought to understand the phenomenon of webinar fatigue by interpreting the lived experiences of professional Filipino teachers who had first-hand experiences of it. More specifically, it sought to answer the questions:
1. How did professional teachers experience webinar fatigue, and
2. How did they make sense of their experience?

2. Research Methods

This study underpinned an interpretive philosophical paradigm to explore, interpret, and develop an initial understanding of webinar fatigue. Furthermore, it considered the tenets of the lifeworld existentials such as the lived body, lived time, lived space, lived materiality, and lived relation (van Manen, 2014), which helped reveal the multi-dimensional and multi-layered meanings or themes of the studied phenomenon. The lived body refers to a person’s everyday life, covering physical or bodily experiences (Rich et al., 2013). The lived time refers to a person’s perspective on the time dimension, which includes memories and future aspirations (Bergman et al., 2016). The lived space refers to a sense or interpretation of space and its effects (Rossetto, 2012). The lived materiality is a person’s meaning of the everyday material he or she is using (van Manen, 2014). The lived relation is the perspective formed by social relationships and interaction with other people (Limbu et al., 2019).

Following the above understanding, interpretive hermeneutic phenomenology (IHP) was anchored by this study. According to Paley (2018), IHP is a qualitative methodology where the subjective, lived experience of individuals is understood using an idiographic approach to develop a general claim. Further, this design is relevant for complex, ambiguous, and emotionally laden phenomena (Smith & Osborn, 2008), under which webinar fatigue falls.

Through the purposive sampling technique, 39 Filipino professional teachers participated in this study based on the following inclusive criteria: 1) with at least five years of teaching experience; 2) who had prior experience of webinar fatigue, or the feeling of exhaustion, tiredness, or being worn out due to the prolonged engagement or participation in webinars; and 3) who are willing to share their detailed experiences. These criteria helped reveal comprehensive data to describe and discuss the phenomenon. Moreover, the teachers worked in different public and private schools in Cebu, Philippines, and taught their respective specializations. Twenty-five (25) worked at the basic education level, and 14 worked at the tertiary level. Twenty-one (21) teachers are female, and 18 are male. Data saturation was applied to signal that sufficient data had been collected (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Data collection involved one-on-one, in-person, and virtual interviews using a semi-structured interview guide anchored on the lifeworld existentials. Some questions were: Lived Body – What are
webinar fatigue’s physical, psychological, and emotional effects on you?; Lived Space – What aspects of the virtual space contribute to webinar fatigue?; Lived Human Relations – How did you experience the people participating in the webinar that could have contributed to your webinar fatigue?; Lived Time – How did you experience the time spent on webinar participation?; Lived Materiality – How did you experience the technology you used during your webinar participation? The standard health measures by the World Health Organization (WHO) were followed, ensuring in-person interactions were free from viral infection. These included social distancing during the interview, decontaminating substances like alcohol, and donning personal protective equipment (PPE). The average time of the interviews was 90 minutes, which helped gather important and in-depth data about the experience of webinar fatigue. The informants decided the time, place, and date of the interviews. The six-step thematic analysis process of van Manen (1997) was used in this study.

Various strategies were applied in this study to ensure the findings’ trustworthiness, such as credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. To enhance the study’s credibility, member checking was conducted by asking the identified study informants to review and provide feedback on the transcripts and interpretations of the findings. This strategy helped translate the study’s findings closer to their realities. Furthermore, triangulation techniques enhance the study’s credibility, such as peer debriefing (asking for an expert review from someone familiar with the phenomenon), researchers’ field notes, and audio recordings. These multiple sources of information contributed to maintaining a reliable chain of evidence for the study’s findings and helped the researchers develop a clear and thorough understanding of the phenomenon. To enhance dependability, transcripts were analyzed using van Manen’s six-step thematic analysis process (1997). Initial codes were developed based on meaning and context and were reviewed by co-authors. To promote transferability, the findings were presented to external experts specializing in social science and educational technology. Their feedback was incorporated into the findings, giving the study a thicker description of the phenomenon. Following Korstjens and Moser (2018), a contextual analysis of the interview was done to provide a more comprehensive description of the findings. The confirmability of the study was established after the above strategies for achieving credibility, transferability, and dependability were followed (Nowell et al., 2017).

To protect the confidentiality of the teachers, they were called informants in this study. Other confidentiality guidelines were explained in their language, including their roles in the study, the benefits they will gain, the possible risks of their participation, and the stipulation of their voluntary participation. All these were stipulated in the Informed Consent Form (ICF) they signed. An ethics exemption (code: 886/2021-06 Tanucan) was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the Cebu Normal University.

3. Results and Discussion

The thorough analysis of the data yielded three significant themes relevant to understanding the phenomenon of webinar fatigue, such as (a) webinar fatigue as a precursor to a disrupted well-being, (b) webinar fatigue as a multifactorial condition, and (c) webinar fatigue: a sacrifice for survival and competitive advantage.

3.1 Webinar fatigue as a precursor to a disrupted well-being

“Describing my experience of webinar fatigue involves how my well-being is disrupted... I feel tired physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, and financially...Initially, I often questioned the worth of participating in the different webinars I must attend.” (Informant 2).

This statement illuminates how webinar fatigue becomes the precursor to disrupted well-being. Evident from the rest of the informants’ responses, the overboard number of online or web meetings or other digital undertakings they needed to attend has affected their physical, emotional, mental,
social, and financial well-being.

3.1.1 Disrupted Physical Well-being

Informant 9 expressed that attending several concurrent webinars can drain participants, making it a dreadful experience that can lead to illnesses. Additionally, other informants stated that physical fatigue from attending numerous webinars hinders productivity due to the physical inefficiencies experienced in performing tasks.

"Having to attend another webinar feels like a punishment to me physically ... I always feel tired and sleepy. My headache and dizziness are getting worse. I always have dry eyes and don't have that much activity compared to my previous routine... The buying of medicine to ease my pain was also frequent.” - Informant 9

Studies concurred with the finding, citing that long working hours induce fatigue and burnout (Andreassen et al., 2018; Salanova et al., 2014). Moreover, studies on the adverse effects of constant staring at another person in a video meeting (Bailenson, 2021) and high screen time exposure (Kummer et al., 2017) would also mirror the experiences of the study's informants. These situations are known to affect self-perceived health and health behavior adversely (Artazcoz et al., 2009), physical activity (Lallukka et al., 2008; Tanucan et al., 2022b), resilience to psychological stress, and work stress (Hsu, 2018).

3.1.2 Disrupted Emotional Well-being

Most informants in the study affirmed that too much webinar exposure strained their emotional well-being since it drained their enthusiasm, passion, patience, and persistence. As a result, negative feelings of irritability, moodiness, and depression were experienced, making the webinar participation experience intolerable and unworthwhile, as reflected in the response of Informant 2.

"My webinar fatigue experience was emotionally draining... I used to be very enthusiastic and passionate when attending different webinars, but after they were offered many times a week, all my enthusiasm and passion slowly faded. I was irritable and moody during those times..." - Informant 2

According to Cuervo et al. (2018), working from home using ICT can create tension, anxiety, exhaustion, and decreased job satisfaction, impairing emotional well-being. Furthermore, Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2021) discovered that many teachers suffered from anxiety, stress, and depression when the schools and universities reopened, which was reported to cause irritability and moodiness (Dacillo et al., 2022). Having impaired emotional well-being caused by prolonged participation in webinars was also supported by the studies of Fauville et al. (2021) and Elbogen et al. (2022).

3.1.3 Disrupted Mental Well-being

The informants claimed they experienced stress, distractions, short-term memory problems, loss of focus, inattentiveness, uncertainty, and poor decision-making during their webinar engagements. Struggling to participate in different webinars, teachers attempted to meet different responsibilities, demands, and expectations, making them dissatisfied with their learning experience.

"I was so stressed with the number of webinars I have attended and needed to attend that my learning was compromised. So many distractions added to my stress, causing less retention in the topics discussed...My experience of webinar fatigue affected my satisfaction with learning.” - Informant 14

“My decision makings and judgment on things were not that good. I had short-term memory problems and was always out of focus and attention.” - Informant 20
This finding supports the study of Fauville et al. (2021), which cites that attending webinars is more psychologically challenging than face-to-face communication due to the concentration it requires. Nadler (2020) theorizes that videoconferencing fatigue is caused by mental overexertion, especially when users exert effort to interact meaningfully with peers using new and unfamiliar communication platforms. In particular, the mechanistic communication and lack of sensory dynamism during videoconferencing contribute to psychological overload (Epstein, 2020).

On the other hand, learning retention and satisfaction were reportedly low, as teachers were already experiencing fatigue, accompanied by distractions and complexities. This finding suggests that while webinars intend to sustain productivity in work and learning, they become inefficient when participants are distracted and burnt out. Scholars like Bell and Federman (2013) and Clark (1994) illuminated a critical element of learning: pedagogy, not just content delivery, guides learning.

3.1.4 Disrupted Social Well-being

The teachers’ narratives pointed out that their experience of webinar fatigue has adversely affected their interactions with family, friends, and peers. They specifically expressed that their exhaustion has caused them to lose energy for social interactions.

"Because of different webinars I was required to attend, I locked myself in my room. Although I would really prefer to interact with my family members at home, I’m bound to stay and finish the webinar...." - Informant 4

Previous studies have likewise demonstrated that the individual-level and environment-level factors underlying the cause of videoconferencing fatigue may engender social isolation and exhaustion (Elbogen et al., 2022). It has also been noted that engagement in prolonged virtual conferences increases the yearning to interact in person with peers and colleagues (Nesher Shoshan & Wehrt, 2021). Moreover, evidence has reported that a limited learning experience in online classes—having more teacher talk with student interaction (Maqableh & Alia, 2021)—produced feelings of loneliness (Smith & Lim, 2020).

3.1.5 Disrupted Financial Well-being

The informants observed financial constraints because they have to allocate extra money for food and online shopping to alleviate the fatigue caused by webinars. They even acquired a loan to purchase new gadgets for online classes, as reflected in the testimonies of Informants 13 and 18.

"I always have this stress-eating, stress-shopping in order to temporarily relieve my stress, which is financially draining..." -Informant 13

"I ended up taking a loan so that I can buy a new laptop to have better webinar experience..." -Informant 18

This finding shows that attending online training or learning causes a financial strain as it requires the internet, devices, and other technologies, as supported by the findings of previous research (Courtet et al., 2020; Kapasia et al., 2020). While many institutions worldwide utilize platforms, including webinars (Qazi et al., 2020; McKechnie et al., 2020), opportunities and resources vary. Those in low-resource settings, like the Philippines, have unequal access to digital and technological tools and services (Tanucan, 2019; Tanucan et al., 2021; Tanucan et al., 2022a), leaving many individuals feel financially strained, leading to their fatigue.

Understandably, the pandemic has caused the emergence of webinars in almost every field of work. The teaching profession, being one of the most stressful professions even before the pandemic (Collie et al., 2012; Maphalala, 2014), has become even more challenging, with the difficulty of conducting online classes (Yang, 2020), additional administrative work, (Kendrick, 2020), providing
mental health care for students (Araújo et al., 2020), and the need to participate in different webinars to cope with the demands of educational and societal changes. Hence, when the demand to attend various webinars becomes overbearing, work-life balance is disrupted, compromising many dimensions of well-being.

3.2 Webinar fatigue as a multifactorial condition

As the informants continued to share their experiences, their narratives started to unveil information regarding the factors underlying webinar fatigue development, such as the technological, personal, environmental, and process factors.

3.2.1 Technological Factor

The narratives of the informants, such as "the screen is too small," "microphones do not work," "internet connectivity is a problem," "complex computer configurations," and "complicated computer or mobile applications," suggest that technology contributes to webinar fatigue. This situation forced many professionals to adopt and understand the complexities of more recent technologies, leaving many feeling more pressured and stressed. As described by Informant 18:

"I am more pressured in this online training setup because, other than not being familiar with the different digital learning platforms, these technologies are complicated to understand."

Other informants also shared the additional effort they must exert, especially when the technology or devices have problems or issues. As Informant 27 expressed:

"I needed to speak louder when my microphone wasn’t working well... I also needed to run to my neighbor for Wi-Fi connection, especially during an intermittent connection. Sometimes, I needed to borrow another laptop or mobile device. I also needed to maintain an upright body posture, especially when I used my laptop on a desk."

The above responses imply that when people perceive technology as complex or have less control over it, the possibility of fatigue is high. This situation relates to the Technology Acceptance Model. The former explains that a person’s adoption of new technology depends on how they perceive the usefulness and usability of the technology (Davis, 1989). The latter expounds on the person’s feeling of pressure or strain due to technology sophistication (Saengchaia et al., 2019). Altogether, the model describes that when a person is unfamiliar with the technology, including its usefulness, there is a greater possibility of repulsion and stress. With the abrupt utilization of webinars as a form of professional training, professionals have been forced to adopt and utilize various videoconference platforms, resulting in stress and pressure (Oksanen et al., 2021). Complex technical features significantly impact people’s stress when using emerging technology (da Silva Cezar & Maçada, 2021; Joo et al., 2018). With many professionals remotely working (Nguyen et al., 2022), webinars and the technological requirements for their conduct have become instrumental. Hence, addressing technical issues when conducting webinars is vital to ensure digital efficacy, equity, and optimize participation.

3.2.2 Personal Factor

Another aspect of the informants’ responses is that personal characteristics influence the development of webinar fatigue. Such characteristics involve at least the age, personality, socio-economic background, and occupation, as described in the following statements:

"I think my age and teaching profession contributed to my fatigue in webinars. Senior citizens like me..."
have difficulty understanding and implementing different webinars and online classes... I think this setup is not suited for us.” - Informant 11

“I am a strict type of a person. I understand the situation nowadays, but I cannot avoid getting irritated by distractions caused by participants who don’t know the basic etiquette of webinar participation” - Informant 9

This finding suggests that exploring a person’s peculiarities, backgrounds, or characteristics is critical in understanding when and how webinar fatigue arises. Although this study’s findings were analyzed based on anecdotal evidence, various works of literature can explain the rationale behind this claim. For instance, the older generation, commonly called “technology migrants,” reportedly has difficulties with remote online learning (Tanucan et al., 2021). Having to unlearn and relearn new skills and complex tasks in a digital setting is a herculean task for them. The same experience has been reported, especially for the socio-economically deprived (Tanucan & Uytico, 2021; Tanucan & Bojos, 2021). Furthermore, the Differential Susceptibility of the Media Effects Model (DSMM) explains that the cause of videoconference fatigue is influenced by general individual socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, race, and ethnicity, including personality traits (Valkenburg, 2013). This assumption was also supported by Fauville et al. (2021) and Oducado et al. (2022a) studies on Zoom fatigue.

Furthermore, the nature of the occupation influences the experience of webinar fatigue, such as those working in ICT and banking (Owusu-Ansah, 2016; Ayyagari et al., 2011; Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008). This idea clarifies that professionals who are at the forefront of online learning and training, like teachers (Besser et al., 2020; Tanucan, 2023; Prado-Gascó et al., 2020), are prone to webinar fatigue (Tanucan & Uytico, 2021). In this pandemic, teachers face a steep learning curve – persistently participating in various webinars to provide students with quality education.

3.2.3 Environmental Factor

On the other hand, the environment is another reported factor contributing to webinar fatigue. The informants disclosed several environmental variables, such as the inappropriate space, poorly ventilated and lighted surroundings, commodious background noises and people, and the need to attend to family-related care and responsibilities. As described by Informant 5:

“I don’t think my house is prepared for webinars and online learning. I don’t have a well-ventilated and lighted space. People and noises in the background were distracting...More so, I’m a parent, and I need to attend to different responsibilities at home...

Most of the study’s informants relate to Informant 5, emphasizing that those who often attend webinars experience seemingly unavoidable environmental issues. This situation furthers the study of Sadeghi (2019), particularly on how environmental disruptors affect student concentration in online, distance, or e-learning. An induced extra cognitive effort to enhance focus is fatiguing in the light of Attention Restoration Theory (ART). The theory explains that effortless attention minimizes fatigue and replenishes worn-out energy (Quinn et al., 2012). Likewise, sustaining attention in webinars amidst environmental disruptors entails effort that reduces energy, eventually leading to fatigue. This idea is supported by the recent findings of Bennett et al. (2021), which noted that the effort required to focus during a video conference is one of the causes of fatigue.

Creating a distraction-free space at home for optimized webinar participation is difficult, especially for professionals who are also parents. People in a work-from-home setting have a high probability of getting distracted by the close presence of children or family members (Kazekami, 2020) and the indistinct boundary between work and home (Grant et al., 2013). This idea goes to say that Filipino teachers are more prone to experiencing a handful of environmental distractions due to culturally inherent family-related care and responsibilities.
3.2.4 Process Factor

Lastly, the findings imply that the process of how webinars are conducted is another factor contributing to webinar fatigue. In particular, the informants’ shared that the all-speaker-talk set-up, crowded presentation, unseamless transition, content cramming, unengaging activities, irrelevant topic, lengthy webinar duration, inhibition of autonomy, and ill-planned schedule are the common webinar processes that induce fatigue. As described in the following statements:

“Facilitators don’t mind proper scheduling of webinars. They usually offered webinars during rest days, sacrificing my family and personal time. Also, they often required us to attend different webinars even if we didn’t want to. Moreover, it made me feel dizzy and irritated whenever the organizers gave us crowded, crammed-up, poorly-transitioned, and lengthy webinar presentations. I think these things were few of the factors why I experienced fatigue in webinars.” – Informant 24

Working-from-home and online-related training have been a whirlwind (Tanucan et al., 2021; Tanucan et al., 2022a), and many have struggled to keep up. For many professionals, conducting a webinar is a new and challenging task. Nevertheless, due to the need for more professional training despite the lockdowns, many were unprepared for webinar conduct and participation (Tanucan & Uytico, 2021), which resulted in some friction, mismanagement, and issues that led to a fatiguing experience for participants, similar to what the study’s informants had experienced. Nadler (2020) also argued that the unique and complex spatial dynamics of video conferencing, which webinar organizers may have overlooked, could be the underlying cause of the participants’ feeling of exhaustion.

The above findings serve as a reality check for webinar organizers and facilitators, particularly regarding the factors to avoid and consider in its conduct. These also support and expand the literature concerning the adverse effects of prolonged direct eye gaze during online training or education, limited physical mobility, and mirror anxiety (Bailenson, 2021; Fauville et al., 2021); crowded presentations that distort images and texts (Fosslien & Duffy, 2020); crammed-up content in one session leading to information overload (Feng & Agosto, 2017); and inhibiting the autonomy of webinar participation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). In general, this study and its supporting literature suggest that facilitators and organizers must carefully select, organize, and schedule content topics that suit participants’ needs, interests, and situations. Therefore, together with other scholars on webinar fatigue (Sharma et al., 2021), this study campaigns for the importance of "less is more" and "quality over frequency" in webinars.

3.3 Webinar fatigue: A sacrifice for survival and competitive advantage

As the previous themes revealed the various challenges, causes, and adverse consequences of webinar fatigue, the informants’ sharing shifted to how they made sense of their experience. In particular, they explained that webinars provided general knowledge about the new normal and allowed them to learn the necessary skills; thus helping them survive and have a competitive advantage in the new education setup. The informants’ statements mostly point to the same meaning-making as that of Informant 35.

“I realized that I need to survive and thrive in the present and future...If one has this sense of need or purpose, he or she will become more resilient in difficult situations because the skills needed to survive in the new normal of education are learned or developed.”

“I need to survive in the new environment today and in the future. Competition is really tough, and one should keep up... that’s why I need to sacrifice. If you will not participate in different webinars; if you’re not persistent enough, you have a little chance to survive now and in the future”– Informant 2

The narratives show that some professional teachers attended webinars and other virtual events
despite feeling exhausted, as they saw webinars as a valuable source of information and professional development, especially during the height of the pandemic. The pandemic has drastically changed the way professionals work and learn. For some teachers, the ability to adapt to virtual learning environments was seen as crucial for their survival in their respective fields. As a result, they were willing to sacrifice much to the point of undermining their well-being in order to maintain their competitive edge and meet the demands of their job.

With the pace of technological advancements and the increasing competition in the job market, professionals may need to attend as many webinars as possible to remain relevant and stand out in their field. Additionally, attending webinars can provide professionals with opportunities to expand their networks and connect with potential clients or collaborators. Professionals who are looking to advance their careers are driven to attend webinars, seeing it as a crucial step towards achieving their goals. This point of catching up with performing peers by joining various webinars can be explained using the self-motivation theory, which cites the performance of demanding tasks for a prolonged time to increase relatedness and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is human nature to seek belongingness and to hone competence. Despite being exhausted from their webinar participation, the teachers are motivated by their nature to be effective in their job (competence) and be at par with their performing peers (relatedness). Teachers in this study were aware that the impact of the pandemic had left the world reeling – desperately searching for solutions to recover. That is why they assumed that those who refuse to embrace and endure webinars have little to no chance of survival in the current and future digital ecosystems.

4. Conclusion

The phenomenon of webinar fatigue, as experienced by teachers, can be understood using three points: a precursor to disrupted well-being, a multifactorial condition, and personal meaning. The point on the precursor to disrupted well-being describes how webinar fatigue disrupts multiple dimensions of well-being, such as the physical, emotional, mental, social, and financial, and how such disruption leads to adverse consequences in work, social interaction, lifestyle management, and learning retention and satisfaction. This idea suggests that despite webinars' advantages, they can be detrimental if they cause fatigue. The point on multifactorial condition highlights the technological, personal, environmental, and process factors contributing to the development of webinar fatigue. This idea suggests that webinar fatigue goes beyond the high volume and varying quality of webinars, as it involves interconnected, diverse factors. This notion suggests that facilitators and organizers must carefully select, organize, and schedule content topics that suit participants’ needs, interests, and situations. The point on personal meaning emphasizes the sense-making of one’s experience of webinar fatigue, which in this study is shown as a form of sacrifice for survival and competitive advantage in the present educational system and beyond. Webinar fatigue is a challenge for professional teachers adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic, but they persevere due to the advantages of survival and maintaining a competitive edge. In the ever-evolving work and education landscape amidst COVID-19, it is crucial to strike a balance between continuous learning and well-being in order to sustain career growth and personal health.

5. Recommendation

The causes and effects of webinar fatigue are multifaceted and interdependent and can be attributed to various factors. Hence, assessing webinar fatigue requires a unique approach. One practical approach to assessing webinar fatigue is to use surveys or questionnaires that assess participants' levels of engagement and fatigue after attending webinars. These surveys can also ask participants to provide feedback on the webinars' content, format, and delivery and their suggestions for improvement. Another approach is to track attendance and participation rates over time to identify patterns in engagement and motivation. This approach can help webinar organizers tailor their
content and delivery to better meet their audience’s needs and situations. It is important to note that webinar fatigue may be challenging to identify, as some individuals may not recognize or report its manifestations. Therefore, academic leaders and practitioners must set control mechanisms to ensure systematic participation in webinars and avoid overtraining.

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