



SHIFTING TO DAKILA: THE GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORM IN THE TIME OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

DaKILa or Data, Knowledge, and Information Launcher is a Moodlecloud platform and the first asynchronous learning tool in the Philippines solely dedicated to training and capacity development programs geared toward gender mainstreaming. The University of the Philippines Center for Women's and Gender Studies Training, Outreach, and Extension Program (TOEP) conceptualized DaKILa in April 2020 as a response to the restrictions of holding in-person training due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting, Gender Sensitivity Training, and the Angat Bayi Political Empowerment Fellowship Program were redesigned with synchronous and asynchronous sessions to ensure the continuity of gender-related training offerings. New courses like Psychosocial Support for Frontlines, Engendering Social Solidarity Economy, and Training for Telecommunicators on How to Handle Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC) Cases were offered. Training participants include faculty and staff from higher educational institutions, women elected officials, and personnel from government and private local and international agencies. However, shifting to remote learning was not without challenges, as it was not as simple as reformulating what was already available. The TOEP team needed to consider the affordances and limitations involved in creating new learning environments for the TOEP team, adult learners, resource persons, and facilitators. While there have been positive comments about incorporating educational technologies, many participants found it challenging to use DaKILa and work at their own pace due to tasks in a work-from-home arrangement and office-related concerns. A stable internet connection has remained a concern for many participants, especially those from rural areas. Continuous adjustments were made based on participants' and resource persons' suggestions and reflections of the TOEP team. Despite the challenges, DaKILa demonstrates the University's unwavering commitment to promoting women's empowerment and gender equality even during uncertain times.

Keywords: gender transformative, COVID-19, online learning

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INTRODUCTION

The Training, Outreach, and Extension Program (TOEP) of the University of the Philippines Center for Women's and Gender Studies (CWGS) is responsible for the design, planning, and implementation of gender-related training and capacity development programs and courses geared toward issues and concerns related to women and gender, such as Gender Sensitivity Training, Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting, Gender Responsive Early Childhood Care and Development, Engendering the Curriculum, and GAD Mainstreaming, to individuals, organizations, institutions, and offices within and outside the University of the Philippines. Training recipients include state colleges and universities, private higher educational institutions, local government units, government agencies, non-government organizations, private companies, and civil society groups. As stated on its website the "program focuses on building the capacity of the faculty to integrate women's/gender theories and topics into their regular courses aside from providing technical expertise on gender mainstreaming and gender sensitivity projects" (University of the Philippines Center for Women's and Gender Studies, 2018).

On March 16, 2020, in the middle of the annual Women's Month celebration, the Philippine government placed the entire Luzon (Office of the President of the Philippines, 2020) and eventually the entire country under strict lockdown to avert the spread of SARS-CoV-2 (Inter-agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, 2020). Non-essential in-person gatherings such as classes and capacity development programs and courses were prohibited, and mobility was restricted only to access and acquire basic needs and services. UNESCO (2020) estimated that as of mid-April 2020, 1.5 billion learners from preschool to higher education levels in 195 countries were affected by the suspension of classes. In relation to this, the UP President, in his message to the UP community, stated, "We have been forced to suspend classes, work, and all other campus activities, and to stay inside our homes and practice social distancing, all to contain the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and to keep our healthcare system from being dangerously overwhelmed" (Concepcion, 2020). Like many other educational institutions across the globe, the University of the Philippines was forced to adopt online teaching and learning across constituent universities immediately.

Redefining the learning space

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, gender-related training programs and sessions such as Gender Sensitivity Training, Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting, and Gender Responsive Early Childhood Care and Development were regularly conducted in physical training spaces within the UP Diliman campus so that participants would experience the vibrant life of campus even for a brief period time. This setup has been in existence since the institution of the UPCWGS in the mid-1990s. Hence, the abrupt and massive changes brought about by COVID-19 have created tremendous disequilibrium not only for the UPCWGS-TOEP team and resource persons but also for the participants. Redefining and relocating the learning space is the next best thing to do. However, an extensive body of literature noted that educational spaces are varied, complex, and evolving, ranging from formal, informal, physical, and virtual (Painter, et al., 2013; Tuckett, 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic has brought immense challenges and opportunities in paving new forms of educational and capacity-building opportunities for all educators and learners (Mutton, 2020), and in building "a resilient educational system" (The World Bank Group, 2021, p. 5).

An extensive body of literature notes that significant transformations in educational systems worldwide happened since the start of the industrial revolution and 1990s has witnessed the introduction and acceptance of online learning (Barrot, 2018; Barrot, 2020;

Kebritchi, Lipschuetz, & Santiago, 2017). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered the familiar teaching-learning terrain (Barrot, Llenares, & del Rosario, 2021; Cahapay, 2020) and without formal training and preparation, educators were hurriedly ushered to develop new teaching approaches and strategies to thrive in the virtual space (Adkins & Tu, 2021; Cutri, Mena, & Whiting, 2020; Kidd & Murray, 2020). Both educators and learners found it challenging to make sense of the measures instituted by educational institutions as anxieties mounted due the demands of distance learning and the use of new virtual learning platforms (Barrot, Llenares, & del Rosario, 2021; (Cahapay, 2020).

Recognizing the seriousness of the situation and impact of the indefinite suspension of in-person activities in the University on gender mainstreaming efforts and the mandate to provide training and capacity-building programs, the UPCWGS-TOEP conceptualized the Data, Knowledge, and Information Launcher, or DaKILa for short, in April 2020, in the middle of the unprecedented global health crisis that altered everyone's life and livelihood.

This article looks into the journey of UPCWGS-TOEP from DaKILa's conceptualization, launching, and implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic for adult professional learners wanting to be familiar with women's and gender studies and gender mainstreaming. Specifically, the study has the following objectives:

1. Describe how the closure of higher educational institutions, offices, and agencies transformed the existing in-person training programs of UPCWGS
2. Describe the strategies employed to redesign in-person training packages for distance learning.
3. Determine the challenges encountered by training staff, participants, and resource persons when in-person sessions shifted to distance learning

The (United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 2002) defines gender mainstreaming in this manner:

The strategy of mainstreaming is defined in the ECOSOC agreed conclusions, 1997/2, as "...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men can benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (p.1).

No less than Republic Act 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women, the Filipino women's bill of rights resonates that gender mainstreaming is a strategy for ensuring gender equitable and transformative policies, programs, and services are present at all levels of society at all times. However, there have been serious questions about how the COVID-19 pandemic has threatened the University of the Philippines' gender mainstreaming initiatives and how the leading offices, the UPCWGS, and Gender and Development (GAD) hubs in constituent universities (CUs) across the UP System would address the centrality of capacity-building programs on gender mainstreaming.

METHODOLOGY

In framing this article, it is essential to understand the nature of spaces for the conduct of training programs for gender mainstreaming and how the UPCWGS-TOEP team, facilitators,

and learners have reinvented themselves and dealt with relocating the familiar learning space to a new and unfamiliar domain. This qualitative research suggests the importance of interrogating the space concerning gender mainstreaming capacity-building activities (e.g. training and short courses on women and gender) and how the shift from in-person to distance learning can still result in meaningful opportunities for teacher-learner dialogue.

The study scrutinized the available data in DaKILa from transitioning to an online platform to the first online course offering, "Psychosocial Support for Frontliners," in 2020 to the last training module, "Social Solidarity Economy," in 2021. The data analyzed include the number of enrolled participants per training, number of participants who finished and did not finish the training course, the length of time answering self-paced exercises, online discussions and comments of the participants in the DaKILa platform, and online post-training evaluation. Likewise, the email correspondences from participants and feedback from the training team and some resource persons were analyzed. Charmaz's (2012) coding technique and thematic analysis guided the researchers in processing the data using inductive and deductive approaches. The researchers examined the data several times to identify recurring themes highlighting the experiences of migrating from the traditional in-person sessions to the online setup. Recognizing that this study is the first of its kind in the history of CWGS, documentation, research and publication are essential components of the first online program and the development of a learning management system (LMS) solely dedicated for the advancement of women's and gender studies, and gender mainstreaming initiatives of UP. Hence, appropriate permission from the participants were obtained and assured that their personal data will be kept confidential and stored in a secured place away from public scrutiny.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Despite the absence of traditional seminar rooms, hard copies of training materials, and the pressures to re-imagine the learning space for capacity-building initiatives for gender mainstreaming, the results of the study revealed that feminist values centered on meaningful collaborations and reflexivity continue to happen even in the most uncertain and formidable time. This section discusses how COVID-19 pandemic affected the existing in-person training of UPCWGS, the challenges encountered and the strategies employed to make distance learning possible.

Shifting from face-to-face to online learning

Traditional face-to-face training

In traditional face-to-face training programs, instructions, assessments, and interactions take place in a physical training space. Resource person use Powerpoint presentations displayed through an LCD projector, and handouts are provided to guide participants. After presentations, training participants have the opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns, and provide feedback. Workshops are conducted in groups, starting with brainstorming activities. Group outputs are typically presented on colored metacards and collated on a Manila paper during the plenary session.

Online learning transformation

Online learning transforms this traditional model by removing the constraints of physical space and time (Cole, 2000). Participants access learning resources via the internet, allowing them to learn at their own pace. Interaction between resource persons and training

participants occur through internet-based platforms (Padolina, 2007). This shift to online learning was chosen by UPCWGS-TOEP to ensure the continued provision of gender-responsive training programs and courses, especially in response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Towards Active Learning and Knowledge Construction

The DaKILa Online Learning Platform is a milestone introduced during the leadership of feminist advocates, UPCWGS Director Dr. Nathalie Lourdes Africa-Verceles and the lead author. Its online learning courses and programs are focused on feminist advocacy, gender transformation, and inclusion, addressing unequal power relations, and challenging societal structures rooted in patriarchy (Mooneyhan, 2018). It is also grounded in constructivist feminist principles, which emphasize that gender is socially constructed through conditioning processes orchestrated by patriarchy. These gender-responsive online learning courses and programs are designed based on constructivist learning principles, through which learners are active participants in knowledge creation, and learning is centered on the participants, with resource persons facilitating and advising rather than instructing. This empowers participants to construct knowledge themselves. One crucial aspect of constructivist learning highlighted is "situated learning," where learning is contextual, allowing participants to apply knowledge in various contexts. Strategies for multi-contextual learning are utilized to ensure comprehensive applicability. Mezirow's transformation theory, which integrates constructivism and cognitivism, describes learning as a process of using prior analysis to form new or revised interpretations of one's experiences. This reflective transformation of belief systems and perceptions constitutes transformative learning, which guides future actions (Ally, 2011, 15-44).

UPCWGS aims to ensure that its online training courses and programs are gender-transformative, inclusive, rights-based, multicultural, empowering, non-discriminatory, diverse, participatory, and sustainable, aligning with its core goals of advancing women's and gender studies. Overall, these were designed to promote gender equality and challenge societal norms through a constructivist learning approach and transformative learning principles.

Gender-Responsive Instructional Design

In a meta-analysis studies done involving media research, Clark pointed out that learners attain remarkable benefits from computer and other audiovisual materials, in comparison to traditional materials used in instruction. However, the similar study also proposed that instructional strategies established within these learning materials, and not the instructional media, are the reasons for these learning benefits (Clark, 1983, 445-459). In order to ensure a transformative and meaningful learning experience among the training participants, UPCWGS Training, Extension, and Outreach Program ensures that instructions within the DaKILa Online Learning Platform are crucially planned following various theories in instructional design.

Table 1

Instructional activities done in DaKILa with theoretical basis

Instructional Activity	Theoretical Basis
A recorded short skit of situations related to the gender fair language or	Problem-based learning (PBL) , in which technology is utilized in order to design and

<p>gender-responsive laws and policies, with the use of devices capable of recording and editing videos.</p>	<p>develop circumstances having similarities to scenarios occurring in the real world, replicating relevant situations, which will aid in the provision of meaningful learning experiences (West & Allman, 2021).</p>
<p>A documentary or news clip videos, a newspaper article, or a gender-related case will be uploaded in the DaKILa, and will be subjected to problematization. Through an online discussion forum, learners are empowered to provide insights and perspectives which could lead to the provision of probable resolution to underlying gender issues.</p>	<p>Inquiry-based learning (IBL), in which the learners are motivated and stimulated towards the active investigation of resource material, scrutinization, and discussion of probable resolutions patterned on processes of examining roadblocks and problems systematic searching for response, occurring in the real world (West & Allman, 2021).</p>
<p>Creation of podcast, video, screencast presentations, posters, or skits performed physically, and journal entries or reflection papers (online or through pen and paper) related to the problematization of various gender issues and thinking of possible resolutions.</p>	<p>Project-based learning (PBL), in which learners are involved in original and composite projects, which usually result in the development of a tangible output that empowers learners towards an active investigation of challenges occurring in the real world and acquisition of a deeper knowledge and skills (West & Allman, 2021).</p>
<p>Accomplishment of various asynchronous tasks and activities in the DaKILa, such as discussion forums revolving to specific topics as Safe Spaces Act (social presence); and acquisition of group reflections on various topics, such as those related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and gender-based violence through a Mentimeter activity (cognitive presence).</p> <p>Through Zoom or Google Meet, live discussion sessions on various topics and consultation sessions could be implemented, where learners' areas of opportunities can be addressed (teaching presence).</p>	<p>Communities of Inquiry Framework, in which technology plays a crucial role in enabling various types of human presence through learning occurring within a learning space or community. The types of human presence include: social presence, which is the feeling of being connected and present with each other, such as discussions occurring through video or text; cognitive presence, which is the feeling of being intellectually present in the learning space or community, where growth and development are enhanced through interaction, such as online question and answer sessions, or collaboration with a group through shared applications; and teaching presence, which is the feeling of getting help and support from a resource person or teacher who is responsible in the design and facilitation of interactions and content, such as a comprehensively designed online course and feedback mechanisms (West & Allman, 2021).</p>
<p>A working final paper which summarizes key important learnings to be submitted by the end of the training course, in which the</p>	<p>Online Collaborative Learning Theory, a model of process-orientation, in which collaborative technology empowers learners</p>

<p>resource person can provide scaffolding to the learners in between the training courses regularly to check what needs to be revised and enhanced.</p>	<p>towards active accomplishment of work together, knowledge creation, and knowledge acquisition of language, analytical concepts, and tasks related to the course, with the support and guidance of an experienced resource person or facilitator across three levels which are divergent thinking, idea organizing, and intellectual convergence (West & Allman, 2021).</p>
<p>Both synchronous and asynchronous sessions of the online course ensure that learners are scaffolded, especially in terms of the ideal technology to exploit and optimize when it comes to various activities and tasks to be accomplished. Activities are designed in a gender-responsive way through the diversity, circumstance, and differentiated behaviors of learners are addressed.</p>	<p>PICRAT Model, in which the considerations of instructional designers revolve around two aspects: the utilization of technology towards the replacement, amplification, and transformation of learning; and the level of involvement and engagement of the learners in the activity, which could be passive, active, or creative (West & Allman, 2021).</p>
<p>In order to understand concepts related to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC), the gender unicorn is used (Verceles, 2021).</p>	<p>Multiple Representation Principle, in which the presentation of explanation could be more effective with using both words and pictures, compared to using words alone (West & Allman, 2021).</p>
<p>A part of the reflection activities, both in asynchronous or synchronous sessions, is listening to recordings of women's and individuals of diverse SOGIESC's experiences coming from different sectors, circumstances, and intersectional identities, such as a Muslim and indigenous communities, and persons with disabilities, among others. After listening, learners will be asked to write an online journal or a pen-and-paper output sharing their reflections.</p>	<p>Split-Attention Principle, in which in the provision of multimedia explanation, words are displayed as auditory narration as a substitute to visual on screen text (West & Allman, 2021).</p>
<p>In the middle of the training program, learners are asked to do self-reflection in terms of their learning experiences. From there, enabling mechanisms are designed and provided to learners who are having difficulties accomplishing past modules or topics.</p>	<p>Individual Differences Principle, in which the above three principles are more crucial for learners with low rather than high knowledge and spatial levels (West & Allman, 2021).</p>

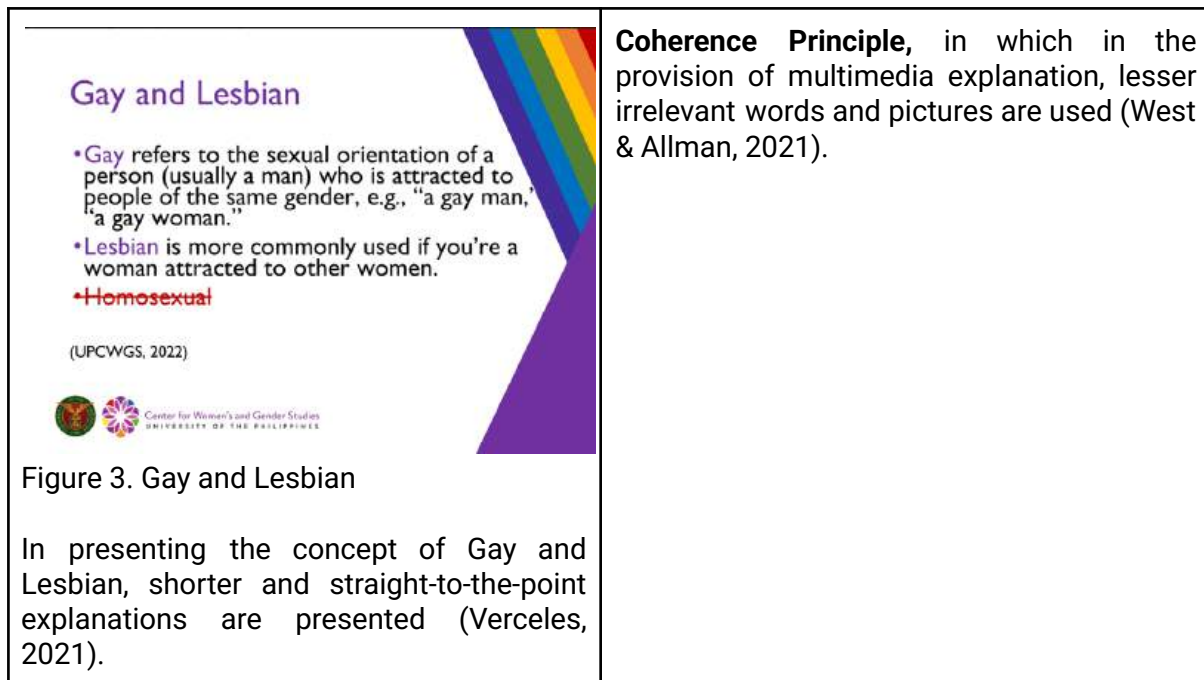


Figure 3. Gay and Lesbian

In presenting the concept of Gay and Lesbian, shorter and straight-to-the-point explanations are presented (Verceles, 2021).

Naming the online learning platform

As the UPCWGS-TOEP team waited for updates on the global and national impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, they wasted no time discussing and conceptualizing ways to continue providing training services while complying with the government's health and safety protocols. There has been a reflection on how UPCWGS can respond to the changing context and where the Training, Outreach, and Extension Program is heading.

Despite the inadequate formal training and firm theoretical handles on distance learning of the UPCWGS-TOEP team, DaKILa was officially launched via Zoom Conferencing during Philippine Independence Day on June 12, 2020. Its primary goal is to ensure that gender-responsive programs and courses offered by UPCWGS-TOEP will continue even during uncertain times. The selection of the launch date was purposeful because it embodies the hopes that the Filipino people will be freed from involuntary confinement, that things will be better, and the resumption of the usual in-person training session will not be far behind.

Choosing the name for the UPCWGS online LMS was never a challenge. Inspired by Dakila, a masterpiece sculpture of feminist artist Sandra Torrijos, which graces the UPCWGS courtyard, the DaKILa symbolizes adaptability, resilience, and innovativeness, representing UP's unwavering commitment to the vision, mission, and goals of promoting women's empowerment and gender justice. DaKILa's logo is adorned with purple-colored designs (symbolizing women) and a rainbow (symbolizing the diversity of gender and LGBTQIA).



Figure 4. DaKILa logo

DaKILa was first introduced through WordPress, but due to high gender-responsive training and capacity-building demands, it was transferred to Moodle Cloud in 2021.

Designing the initial remote learning program

It was the first time in the history the UPCWGS has ventured into distance learning. Before the pandemic, UPCWGS has been busy all year round preparing and conducting various training sessions on campus for faculty and staff of UP and other higher educational institutions, women elected officials, and personnel from government and private local and international agencies, and local government units.

Since onsite training sessions were no longer allowed, the UPCWGS TOEP team envisioned its first online training offering as a tribute not only to health sector frontliners but to other frontliners from various essential industries who were required to be physically visible on their respective jobs. These people are usually the ones who may be in close contact with patients, customers, or coworkers and who may be prone and vulnerable to infections and sickness brought about, say for instance, by viruses, bacteria, or other harmful conditions (Tomer & Kane, 2020).

The *Online Training on Gender Responsive Psychosocial Support for Frontliners in Times of Disaster* was offered thrice in 2020. The first training course ran from June to August, while the second and third training courses ran from September to November simultaneously, one of which was a mixed batch, while the other was exclusive for a government agency.

Since the online training on *Gender Responsive Psychosocial Support for Frontliners in Times of Disaster* followed the design and mechanism of online learning, synchronous and asynchronous sessions were conducted. Synchronous sessions happened weekly via Zoom conferencing, while asynchronous sessions involved various activities that the training participants could accomplish in the DaKILa online learning platform at their own pace but within a given time frame.

This online training course was composed of seven course-specific modules, seven wellness and self-care modules and one introductory module, the Pámagmanánu¹. The following are the seven specific modules for the first online training course of UPCWGS developed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2.

Online Training on Gender-Responsive Psychosocial Support for Frontliners in Times of Disasters

	Module Name	Mode of Instruction
Week 1	Module 1: Concepts Related to Disaster	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Week 2	Module 2: Who are the Frontliners in Times of Disaster?	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Week 3	Module 3: Impact of Disasters on Frontliners	Synchronous session – Zoom

¹ Pámagmanánu refers to customary and courteous greetings which could be polite, casual, or formal. These have become the standard greeting, addressing the other person's condition at any given time, or inquiring about the person's well-being (Montalbo, 2019).

		Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Week 4	Module 4: Introduction to Intersectionality for Frontliners	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Week 5	Module 5: Factors Affecting Delivery of Services	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Week 6	Mental Health	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Week 7	Self-Care	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform

Recognizing the heavy burdens of the participant-frontliners, Week 7 – Wellness and Self-care Module aims to promote wellbeing, mindfulness, stress management, leisure, and gratitude. This module was available to the participants anytime during the training. Table 2 presents the contents of Module 7, some of which were pre-recorded instructional videos such as dance, mandala making, and yoga and meditation.

Table 3.

Contents of Module 7 - Self-care

Activity Name	Mode of Instruction
Dance	Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Yoga and Meditation	Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Arts and Mandala Making	Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Positive Interiors	Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Nutritious Comfort Food	Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Good Grooming	Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Journaling	Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform

Other DaKILa Training Courses and Programs

Aside from the Online Training on Gender Responsive Psychosocial Support for Frontliners in Times of Disaster, there were other online gender-related training courses offered. These training courses originated from CWGS in-person courses and were redesigned to suit the current situation. These training programs were products of collaboration with partner UP constituent universities (CUs), local and international agencies and organizations. Table 3 presents the other online course offerings from 2020 to 2021.

Table 4.
Other online gender-responsive training courses

Course	Brief Description	Mode of Instruction
Gender Sensitivity Training	Capacity development and critical awareness raising session towards the concepts related to sex and gender through topics dealing with SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics, GAD (gender and development), gender fair language, and laws and policies related to women and gender.	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting	Capacity development course for government employees towards the preparation and accomplishment of the GAD Plan and Budget, and GAD Accomplishment Report, as well as the proper utilization of the 5% GAD fund towards gender transformative and inclusive programs, projects, and enabling mechanisms.	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Online Training for Telecommunicators on How to Handle VAWC (Violence Against Women and Children) Cases	Capacity development course for telecommunicators towards gender responsive and survivor-centered approaches in dealing with telephone calls associated with GBV (gender based violence) or VAWC (violence against women and children).	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Engendering Social Solidarity Economy	Capacity development course towards the integration of feminist lens in the SSE (social solidarity economy) perspectives.	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Strengthening Capacities Government Agencies and Partner Institutions in Providing Survivor-Centered and Trauma Informed Legal Services	Capacity development course for the employees of a government agency and its partner institutions towards the incorporation of gender responsive, survivor-centered, and trauma informed in the provision of legal aid services.	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Strengthening Capacities of Law Enforcers in Ensuring Survivor-centered Approaches in in Cases of Gender-Based Violence	Capacity development course for law enforcers towards the integration of gender responsive and survivor-centered approaches in the management of cases on gender based violence.	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform

GAD Strategic Plan 2022 – 2028	Capacity development course for the employees of government agencies towards the integration of gender transformative strategies within the gender mainstreaming efforts of the agency.	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Enhancing the Knowledge and Counseling Skills on VAWC	Capacity development course of the employees of government agencies towards the application of gender responsive and survivor-centered approaches in the provision of legal and counselling services.	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform
Angat Bayi Women’s Political Empowerment Fellowship Program	Capacity development course designed for local women leaders such as governors, vice governors, mayors, vice mayors, board members, and councilors towards the integration of transformative feminist leadership into the policies, programs, projects, and enabling mechanisms being implemented within their respective local government units.	Synchronous session – Zoom Asynchronous session – DaKILa online learning platform

Ten online training courses were developed and offered from 2020 to 2021, reaching 616 participants – 453 females and 163 males all over the country and other parts of the world, such as Indonesia, Tanzania, and Vietnam. Training participants include faculty members and staff from UP and other higher educational institutions, employees of government offices, and private and local and international organizations. Table 4 presents the number of participants who participated in UPCWGS' gender-related online training courses.

Table 5.

Number of Participants in UPCWGS 10 gender-related online training courses from 2020-2021

Training Course	Number of Participants		
	Females	Males	Total
1. Online Training on Gender Responsive Psychosocial Support for Frontliners in Times of Disaster	124	39	163
2. Gender Sensitivity Training	18	19	37
3. Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting	57	9	66
4. Online Training for Telecommunicators on How to Handle VAWC (Violence Against Women and Children) Cases	41	32	73
5. Engendering Social Solidarity Economy	24	21	45
6. Strengthening Capacities of Government Agencies and Partner Institutions in Providing Survivor-Centered and Trauma Informed Legal Services	36	5	41
7. Strengthening Capacities of Law Enforcers in Ensuring Survivor-centered Approaches in in Cases of Gender-Based Violence	38	0	38
8. Towards a GAD Strategic Plan 2022 – 2028	90	30	120

9. Enhancing the Knowledge and Counseling Skills on VAWC	8	8	16
10. Angat Bayi Women's Political Empowerment Fellowship Program	17	0	17
Total	453	163	616

Challenges and Remedies related to DaKILa

On the side of the training participants

The sudden shift from face-to-face training to an online learning environment gave rise to various challenges related to digital literacy and knowledge in educational technology. Needless to say, it was not an easy task redesigning the existing training materials for distance learning and reproducing what was already available. The UPCWGS-TOEP needed to consider the affordances and limitations in creating new learning environments for adult learners, resource persons, and facilitators, considering that the training team did not have enough formal training and extensive experience in this teaching modality. Only two of the four team members had attended massive online open courses (MOOC) not as curriculum or online training designers but as participants or students before the COVID-19 pandemic.

While there have been positive comments on incorporating technologies, many participants found navigating the unfamiliar online platform extra challenging. Based on the training needs assessments before the start of each training course, a huge percentage of enrollees did not have any knowledge and experience in utilizing online learning platforms such as Wordpress and Moodle Cloud. Some participants also misplaced or forgot their passwords in DaKILa and would frequently request a password reset. To address this issue, digital registration toolkits and animated how-to's were created using the available graphic design applications. Likewise, the introductory module, called Pámagmanánu which is a common module across all courses, was made available in DaKILa. Initially, Pámagmanánu Module contains the following:

- Welcome message from the Deputy Director for Training, Outreach and Extension Program
- Discussion Board to Welcome Fellow Learners
- Welcome video from the Director of UPCWGS
- A Special Message from the TOEP Team
- Introduction of the TOEP Team which contains their job descriptions and role in the training course
- Meet the Resource Persons
- Introduction to the Course
- Course Goal Setting for the Participants
- House Rules

Based on the post-evaluation feedback, some of the challenges that the training participants reported were the following: time management issues, particularly to those who are engaged in full-time work; internet connectivity issues, particularly to those training participants based in island provinces and other low income countries; mental health issues, such as cases of depression and anxiety, which affected the training participants' motivation; and health-related issues, such as those participants who tested positive for COVID-19 within the duration of the online training period. Differences in time zones for international participants also posed problems during synchronous sessions.

Consequently, keeping the dropout rates low has always been a concern. Many participants verbalized having difficulties working at their own pace due to work-from-home

arrangements, balancing employment and care work responsibilities, and attending a course in an unfamiliar setting. Data from DaKILa disclosed that many participants could not submit requirements on time or keep up with the pace while synchronous sessions noted a decline in the number of enrollees attending and participating actively in discussions and workshops.

For example, data from the *Online Training on Psychosocial Support for Frontliners in Times of Disaster* revealed comparable differences between the number of accepted training participants and those who completed the said online course. Figure 1 shows that in Batch 1 (regular), out of the 40 training participants who were accepted, 25 completed it. In Batch 2, out of the 71 training participants who were accepted, 32 completed the online, and in Batch 3, all 52 training participants completed the online course.

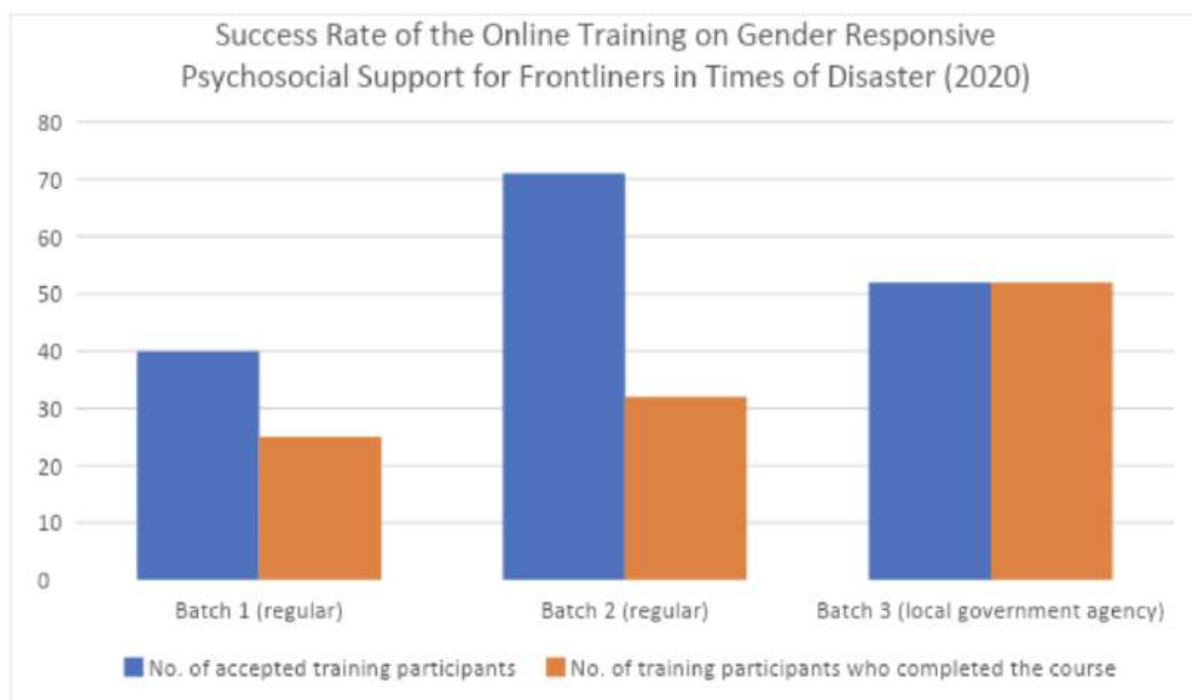


Figure 5. Number of accepted participants vs. those who finished the Online Training on Gender Responsive Psychosocial Support for Frontliners in Times of Disasters.

On the side of resource persons

It was not only the participants and the TOEP staff who experienced these challenges, resource speakers who were used to conducting in-person sessions for decades also grappled with making sense of the new learning space. Some resource persons thought that the strategies they would use were just the same as in in-person sessions, and they could talk for hours during synchronous sessions making the participants passive recipients of information. Some resource persons experienced difficulties sharing their slide presentations and were unaware of any interactive presentation software and digital whiteboards that they could use to engage the participants during synchronous sessions. Due to work from home setup, background noise such as barking of the dogs, sound of the doorbell and the busy street, and poor internet connectivity also posed challenges.

Before and after synchronous session activities such as conducting technical rehearsals and workshops, introducing learning software, assisting less digitally experienced resource persons, and providing regular feedback proved helpful.

On the side of the team

As human beings, the TOEP team also experienced challenges and anxieties about distance learning and using a virtual learning platform. This concern primarily emanated from the fact that the team had minimal access to professional development programs on distance learning. With the various demands for training from UP and government and private institutions and individuals to provide training services in the confines of their homes, acquiring digital literacy and skills in no time has been their primary concern. A series of discussions, self-learning activities, and sharing of experiences on distance learning were done to boost the confidence of the staff.

They also verbalized concerns related to balancing work and familial responsibilities in a work-from-home setup, considering that most of them were in the sandwich generation, who are simultaneously caring for their young children and older parents (Miller, 1981; Tongson, 2019). Likewise, they also worry about their health and well-being during a raging pandemic.

Discussing expectations, setting rules and boundaries, discussing reasonable deadlines, and managing time correctly were some remedies employed to cope with the challenges and demands. Providing internet subsidies allowed the TEOP team to avail of a better internet provider. Rules include respecting each other's lunch breaks, and not texting and no emails after office hours, during weekdays, and holidays.

Table 6.

Common Challenges Encountered in a Remote Learning Space

On the side of participants	On the side of the resource persons	On the side of the training team
Anxiety	Background noise during lecture	Anxiety
Depression	Inadequate professional preparation for remote learning	Inadequate professional preparation for remote learning
Forgotten password in DaKILa	Inadequate digital skills	Inadequate digital skills
Internet connectivity issues	Internet connectivity issues	Internet connectivity issues
Lack of digital skills	Time management issues	Tested positive for COVID-19
Tested positive for COVID-19	Unpaid care work	Time management issues
Time management issues	Work from home setup	Unpaid care work
Unpaid care work		Work from home setup
Work from home setup		

Discussion

COVID-19 has exponentially increased the demands for distance learning and put tremendous pressure on many educational institutions like UPCWGS to respond to the demands of the times. Like other distance learning setups, the new learning space provided a host of advantages for all involved- participants, resource persons, and the team-

especially regarding flexibility, accessibility, and affordability (Fotjik, 2018; Gunawardena & Mclsacc, 2004). Similarly, UPCWGS training participants could access DaKILa anytime and anywhere using their mobile phones, tablets, and desktop computers. Apart from spending less or no time on travel, they were learning new concepts and skills without leaving the comforts of their homes and offices to travel to the venue. They were also introduced to new and modern technologies, which were unimaginable for them to use before the pandemic. A common information source, especially for professionals engaged in the field of distance education, which includes online learning, is Lockwood's, *The Design and Production of Self-Instructional Materials*, in which the beneficial advantages of self-instructional materials were provided. One of the distinctive features described was the instructional material's availability at any time and place. The availability of self-instructional materials at any time would allow the training participants or learners to participate in the learning process at their preferred time and place (Lockwood, 1998). Similarly, Padolina (2007) noted that through modern technological tools used in interaction and communication, training participants are enabled and given the capabilities to organize learning groups, perform group activities, and finish group assignments. The training participants of *Strengthening Capacities of Law Enforcers in Ensuring Survivor-centered Approaches in Cases of Gender-based Violence and Online Training for Telecommunicators on How to Handle VAWC* made action plans and developed skits simulating how to provide emphatic gender-responsive and survivor-centered responses to those who experienced GVB. Meanwhile, *Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting Training* participants made specific plans to utilize their agencies' annual budget for gender mainstreaming. Participants of *Towards a GAD Strategic Plan* identified gender transformative strategies and activities necessary to address existing client-focused and organizational-focused gender issues in their respective agencies through workshops and asynchronous group works. Business plans with a feminist perspective were presented as a culminating activity of the *Social Solidarity Economy* participants. Angat Bayi fellows had workshops on creating ordinances and programs that address women's concerns and issues and gender inequality in their local government units.

Feminism and distance learning

Perhaps one wonders why feminist pedagogy is at the heart of this distance learning space. Feminist pedagogy is hinged on feminist principle of recognizing women's and other marginalized individuals' agency to contribute meaningfully to their families, organizations, and communities and to end all forms of discrimination, exclusion, marginalization, and oppression at various levels - individual, family, institutional, and societal (Hasse-Biber, 2014; Kabeer, 2005; Ofreneo, Apuan, & Claudio, 1997). Considering the diverse lived experiences and the various voices of women and other marginalized groups, feminist pedagogy is a dynamic and interdisciplinary approach to bringing about transformative change, social justice, and activism through collaboration, inclusion, and a participatory learning environment (Louise-Lawrence, 2014; Shrewsbury, 1987; Webb, Allen, & Walker, 2002). When developing DaKILa, it was taken into account that the participants - learners, the training team, and resource persons - had varying levels of experience with distance learning, modern technology, and online resources, as well as different perspectives on gender issues and diverse familial and employment roles and responsibilities. By fostering critical discussions about gender, power, and inequality, the course offerings were designed thoughtfully to advance feminist values and principles with the end in view of collapsing hierarchies, promoting collaboration, and emphasizing critical thinking and social justice (McCusker, 2017; De Welde, et al., 2013). DaKILa not only aspired to create a democratic and participatory environment, but it offered the participants greater flexibility in balancing life, work, and continuing education right at the confines of their private spheres.

According to Saplala and Westgaard (2007), one of the most critical and significant components of the distance education system is student support, which comprises the subsystems, structures, and mechanisms related to course design and development, the processes of teaching and learning, organization, and administration. These subsystems are interconnected and working harmoniously to support distance learners, enabling them to become successful and productive amidst their detachment from their teacher, classmates, and academic institutions. Personnel and staff involved in providing student support should go through relevant training programs on distance education, especially for developing independent learners. In line with Saplala and Westgaard (2007), the TOEP team also benefited from this new training delivery mode by harnessing their digital skills and developing training courses for remote learning. As they redesigned, planned, and implemented online training sessions, they became adept in using a variety of virtual meeting platforms and digital interactive applications and managing a learning management system. Consequently, these new digital skills enabled them to assist students and resource persons during synchronous and asynchronous sessions.

UPCWGS remote learning experience is similar to earlier studies on the challenges of this type of modality. One of the major challenges cited in various literature on remote learning is the inability of many learners for self-managed learning that often result in difficulties understanding technical concepts, paying attention to online lectures, and sustaining interest to finish the course (Alea, Miguel, Robledo, & Alam, 2020; Fotjik, 2018; Moore & Kearsley, 2012). The lack of in-person interactions between learners and lecturers, inadequate and unproductive interactions between and among learners, and the challenge of sustaining a high level of enthusiasm and motivation to finish the training course were documented by the TEOP across the training course except for institutions that required their employees to finish it.

A noble observation in the UPCWGS remote learning experience is that a vast majority of participants were females. There remains a question of why more females across the ten training courses participated. Is it because most people think that gender mainstreaming is a women's business? Hence, more women should be involved in it. Despite their busy schedule and their concerns of balancing work and familial responsibilities in a work from home setup, these women found time to attend an online training course aimed at reducing gender disparities and emancipation of women.

Despite the odds and limitations of the training staff and some resource persons in implementing distance learning and the various challenges the participants encountered, DaKILa represents UP's unwavering commitment to the mission, vision, and goals of promoting women's empowerment, gender equality, and gender justice even during a global disaster.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As modalities and pedagogies in the provision of future professional training programs and courses are continuously developed and modified to adapt to the needs of diverse trainees and organizations, especially in the transition to the so-called "new normal", the UP Center for Women's and Gender Studies' Training, Outreach, and Extension Program believes that DaKILa will continue to be an important component of its gender responsive training programs and courses. As new training setups, such as hybrid and blended, are continuously implemented and practiced in most offices and organizations, UPCWGS TOEP's training programs and courses will be designed in a framework which is inclusive, participatory, and learner-centered. Sustainable mechanisms and processes when it comes to needs

assessment and analysis should be adopted by the team to ensure that specific learning and training needs are obtained and addressed. Roadblocks and challenges which were encountered in previous online training program implementations should be analyzed and reviewed for the purpose of filling in the learning gaps and improving the overall quality of the training programs and courses.

There have been concerns such as change in administration and allocation of resources whether DaKILa will continue to serve its purpose as a repository of critical information which can be utilized to enhance knowledge, skills, and proficiencies when it comes to the all-inclusive and comprehensive study of women and gender. These are vital towards the realization of creating gender-responsive communities and gender-transformative programs in which structures and mechanisms are established within the core values of gender transformation, inclusion, rights-based and multi-cultural approaches, and sustainable development.

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