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Voices of Public Elementary School Teachers Teaching Generation Alpha Learners

Cherly G. Paulo^{1*}

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how teachers experience and understand the classroom behaviors of Generation Alpha learners in public elementary schools in Sto. Niño District, South Cotabato, particularly in a time shaped by digital technology. Using a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach, the research focused on capturing the real-life stories and insights of nine purposively selected teachers who directly handle these learners. Data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and analyzed through thematic coding, allowing patterns, meanings, and shared experiences to emerge. The findings revealed a classroom environment where technology plays a dual role: it increases engagement through interactive and multimedia learning, yet also brings challenges such as short attention spans, digital distractions, and difficulties in social interaction. Teachers described how their roles have shifted from traditional instructors to facilitators, mentors, and digital guides who must constantly adapt their strategies. They also emphasized the importance of working closely with parents and the community to guide learners toward responsible technology use. The study highlights that teaching Generation Alpha learners is both rewarding and demanding, requiring a balance between innovation and discipline, as well as a strong commitment to nurturing not only academic skills but also values and responsible digital behavior.

INTRODUCTION

In today's classrooms, a new generation of learners is reshaping the dynamics of teaching and learning. Known as Generation Alpha, this cohort, born between 2010 and 2024, is the first to grow up fully immersed in digital environments. Surrounded by touchscreens, artificial intelligence, and constant connectivity, these learners experience the world differently from previous generations. As a result, educators worldwide are observing significant shifts not only in how students process information but also in how they behave, interact, and engage within classroom settings.

Existing literature presents Generation Alpha as highly visual, curious, and fast-paced learners who perform well in technology-rich and interactive environments (McCrindle & Fell, 2020; Shin & Lee, 2022). They tend to thrive in collaborative and multimedia-based learning contexts. However, researchers also highlight emerging concerns, including shorter attention spans, increased sensitivity to overstimulation, and a strong reliance on instant feedback (Duffy, 2023; Rowlands & Nicholas, 2022). While these learners demonstrate advanced digital skills, they may struggle with self-regulation, sustained focus, and patience factors that significantly influence classroom behavior.

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education's MATATAG curriculum emphasizes the need for inclusive, adaptive, and future-ready education. Despite this direction, public elementary school teachers especially in rural and underserved areas face complex challenges

in addressing the needs of Generation Alpha learners. Studies by Dela Cruz (2023) and Ramos and Javier (2024) reveal that while digital exposure enhances learners' creativity and confidence, it may also lead to distractibility, impulsive behavior, and difficulties in social interaction when not properly guided. These realities highlight the growing tension between the benefits and challenges of digital integration in classrooms.

At the local level, particularly in Sto. Niño, South Cotabato, teachers witness these changes firsthand. Learners often respond more actively to digital stimuli than traditional teaching methods, while collaborative engagement is sometimes affected by individual digital habits. As noted by Cimene *et al.* (2024), addressing these challenges requires context-sensitive and community-based approaches that consider learners' socio-cultural environments. Teachers in Mindanao report that although Generation Alpha learners are expressive and technologically skilled, many need support in attention regulation, interpersonal skills, and engagement in non-digital learning activities.

Despite the increasing body of research on Generation Alpha, a significant gap remains. Most existing studies are quantitative in nature, focusing on measurable aspects such as screen time, academic performance, or attention span. There is limited qualitative research, particularly in Region XII, that explores how teachers personally experience and interpret the classroom behaviors of these learners. The voices, insights, and lived experiences of teachers who directly navigate these daily classroom

¹ Sultan Kudarat State University, South Cotabato, Philippines

* Corresponding author's e-mail: cherly.paulo@deped.gov.ph

realities remain underrepresented in the literature.

This gap underscores the need for a qualitative, context-driven inquiry that captures the depth and complexity of classroom experiences in the digital age. Understanding how teachers perceive and respond to Generation Alpha learners' behavior is essential for improving teaching strategies, strengthening classroom management, and creating meaningful learning environments.

To address these gaps, the study aims to explore teachers' lived experiences in handling the classroom behaviors of Generation Alpha learners in public elementary schools. By focusing on real classroom interactions and teacher narratives, the study seeks to provide a deeper, more human understanding of how digital influences shape learner behavior. Ultimately, it hopes to contribute to more responsive, compassionate, and effective educational practices that balance technological advancement with holistic learner development.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored teachers' lived experiences and insights as they navigate the classroom behaviors of Generation Alpha learners in the digital age. Guided by a phenomenological lens, the research sought to understand how teachers describe, interpret, and make meaning of the behavioral patterns exhibited by these digital-native learners.

The following research questions were formulated to capture both the essence of teachers' experiences and the underlying conditions that shape these classroom interactions.

1. What are the lived experiences of teachers in public elementary schools as they handle Alpha Generation learners' classroom behavior shaped by digital technologies?

1.1 What classroom situations do teachers encounter regarding students' behavior influenced by digital technologies?

1.2 What specific incidents illustrate how digital exposure affects learners' behavior?

1.3 Who are the people usually involved in these situations, and how do they respond?

1.4 How does being a teacher in the digital age affect the way you respond to learners' behaviors?

1.5 How do you describe your observations and insights regarding the classroom behavior of Alpha Generation learners in the digital age?

1.6 Given what you have shared about your experiences with Alpha Generation learners, how do you see their self-perception and identity as students evolving in the future?

1.7 In what ways do you think digital technologies influence how Alpha Generation learners imagine themselves in their future roles as learners and citizens?

1.8 What changes do you associate with your role as a teacher when dealing with Alpha Generation learners influenced by technology?

1.9 How does your experiences of teaching digitally

influenced learners affect your relationships with colleagues, parents, or significant others in your life?

1.0 Is there anything else that you would like to share?

2. How do teachers describe the contexts of their lived experiences in public elementary schools as they handle the classroom behavior of Alpha Generation learners shaped by digital technologies?

2.1 What feelings are generated by your encounters with Alpha Generation learners in the classroom? How does digital technology shape those feelings?

2.2 What thoughts stand out for you when reflecting on the behaviors of learners growing up in the digital age?

2.3 What bodily changes or states (such as stress, energy, or excitement) are you aware of when managing classroom behaviors shaped by technology?

2.4 What joys do you experience in teaching Alpha Generation learners who are immersed in digital tools and environments?

2.5 How do you describe the challenges, problems, and issues you face in addressing classroom behaviors influenced by digital technology?

2.6 Have you shared all that is significant concerning your experiences of Alpha Generation learners' classroom behaviors in the digital age?

2.7 Is there anything else that you would like to share?

3. How do teachers in public elementary schools, who handle the classroom behavior of Alpha Generation learners, see themselves in the future?

3.1 How do you see yourself in the future as a teacher of various generations of learners?

3.2 How do you perceive the values, attitudes, and aspirations of Alpha Generation learners as shaped by their exposure to digital tools in the classroom?

3.3 Based on your teaching experience, how do you envision the long-term impact of digital learning environments on the future self-concept of Alpha Generation learners?

3.4 Is there anything else that you would like to share?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a well-rounded discussion of relevant theories, research findings, and contextual insights closely related to this study. It situates the research within the broader body of existing knowledge by integrating both foundational and recent studies aligned with its focus and objectives. By carefully synthesizing prior literature, this chapter brings out key themes, ongoing debates, and existing gaps in research. In doing so, it provides a strong and meaningful academic foundation for the present study.

Generation Alpha

Generation Alpha, defined as individuals born from 2010 onwards, represents the first cohort to be fully immersed in digital technology from early childhood. Scholars emphasize that this generation's constant exposure to digital devices, artificial intelligence, and online platforms profoundly influences their cognitive development,

communication styles, and social interactions. McCrindle and Fell (2020) describe Generation Alpha as the most technologically supplied and globally connected generation, highlighting how their learning and socialization are shaped by digital immersion. Similarly, Seemiller and Grace (2021) underscore the educational implications of this digital upbringing, noting that continuous engagement with artificial intelligence and online platforms distinguishes Generation Alpha's classroom behavior and cognitive processes from those of previous generations. Together, these studies provide critical insights into the unique challenges and opportunities educators face in addressing the needs of this digitally native generation.

Behavioral and cognitive patterns among Generation Alpha are deeply shaped by their digital immersion, with international studies consistently highlighting both opportunities and challenges. Holmes *et al.* (2022) emphasize that while technology-driven environments enhance engagement through gamified applications and adaptive learning platforms, they also contribute to shorter attention spans and mental health concerns when screen time is excessive. This duality underscores the need for balanced instructional strategies that integrate interactive tools while safeguarding learners' well-being. Complementing this, UNESCO (2021) reports that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital dependence among children, revealing disparities in access to devices and internet connectivity across regions. The organization stresses that equitable access and responsible technology use are essential to ensure that Generation Alpha's development remains holistic, particularly in contexts where socio-economic inequalities persist.

Characteristics of Generation Alpha Learners

Generation Alpha, generally defined as individuals born from 2010 onwards, is widely acknowledged as the first generation to experience complete immersion in digital technology from birth. Prensky (2021) characterizes them as "digital natives from infancy," emphasizing their distinct cognitive and behavioral traits shaped by continuous exposure to smart devices, artificial intelligence, and internet-based platforms. This perspective underscores the generational shift in learning behaviors, particularly their preference for interactive, multimedia-based instruction and their tendency toward multitasking. Complementing this, Holmes *et al.* (2023) highlight the transformative role of artificial intelligence and adaptive learning technologies in shaping personalized educational experiences for Generation Alpha.

Their findings demonstrate that AI-driven platforms not only enhance engagement and academic performance but also necessitate equitable access and responsible integration to ensure holistic development. Collectively, these studies provide critical insights into the behavioral, cognitive, and educational patterns of Generation Alpha, situating digital immersion as a defining factor in both global and Philippine contexts.

Behavioral Patterns of Generation Alpha Learners

Generation Alpha learners demonstrate high engagement in technology-enhanced environments but often show reduced attention span in traditional instructional settings. Ziatdinov and Cilliers (2022) found that gamified instruction and interactive simulations significantly increase learner participation, particularly when immediate feedback is provided. Complementing this, Apaydin, Kaya, and Cilliers (as cited in Höfrová *et al.*, 2024) emphasize that digital storytelling approaches foster sustained engagement, underscoring the importance of interactive instructional design.

Cognitive development among Generation Alpha reflects both adaptability and dependence on digital systems. Mehta and Giunchiglia (2025) note that while learners process information quickly, they often rely on external digital scaffolds, limiting deep analytical thinking. Supporting this, Ziatdinov and Cilliers (2022) caution that multitasking behaviors in digital environments may fragment attention and reduce persistence in problem-solving, highlighting the need for interventions that strengthen metacognitive skills.

Communication among Generation Alpha learners is strongly influenced by digital platforms. Höfrová *et al.* (2024) describe their communication as multimodal, often involving emojis, short videos, and interactive messaging. Similarly, Mehta and Giunchiglia (2025) emphasize that this shift from traditional verbal communication to visual-digital expression reflects broader cultural changes in how learners interact socially and academically.

Emotional regulation among Generation Alpha learners is highly shaped by digital reinforcement systems. Yılmaz and Griffiths (2023) found that constant exposure to instant rewards reduces tolerance for delayed gratification, leading to frustration when feedback is absent. Complementing this, Ziatdinov and Cilliers (2022) argue that structured teacher guidance within technology-supported environments improves emotional stability and behavioral regulation.

Technology plays a central role in shaping Generation Alpha behavior. Höfrová *et al.* (2024) emphasize that early exposure to digital devices enhances access to information but introduces risks such as dependency on external stimuli. Mehta and Giunchiglia (2025) further highlight that while digital literacy is high, learners often require structured guidance to balance independent learning with responsible technology use.

Overall, Generation Alpha learners are characterized by high digital fluency, interactive learning preferences, and strong engagement in collaborative environments. Ziatdinov and Cilliers (2022) consistently emphasize their technological immersion and adaptive learning behaviors, while Höfrová *et al.* (2024) identify challenges in attention span, deep thinking, and emotional regulation. Together, these studies underscore the dual role of technology as both an enhancer and limiter of Generation Alpha's holistic development.

Teachers' Lived Experiences in Handling Alpha Learners
Teachers' lived experiences in handling Generation Alpha learners are increasingly examined in educational research due to the digital transformation of classrooms. These learners' strong familiarity with technology requires educators to integrate digital tools, gamification, and multimedia resources into instruction, marking a shift from traditional pedagogical approaches (Höfrová *et al.*, 2024).

Research has highlighted challenges in classroom management and learner engagement. Educators report difficulties in maintaining attention spans and balancing structured curricula with students' preference for interactive and game-based learning, which contributes to increased workload and stress (Valdez, 2024).

In the Philippine context, teachers have reported both opportunities and challenges in fostering engagement through digital activities. Issues such as gadget overreliance, shortened attention spans, and limited resources have prompted Filipino educators to adopt blended learning and contextualized instructional strategies (Cimene *et al.*, 2024).

Overall, the literature indicates that teachers' lived experiences are characterized by instructional innovation, emotional resilience, and pedagogical transformation. Studies converge on the need for learner-centered and technology-integrated approaches, while also pointing to gaps in understanding the long-term emotional and professional impacts of teaching Generation Alpha learners (Plaza *et al.*, 2024).

Contexts Shaping Teachers' Experiences

Socio-cultural factors such as Filipino values, family structures, and community expectations significantly influence teachers' classroom experiences.

Eknadan (2024) documented that teacher in public elementary schools integrate values such as pakikipagkapwa (empathy), paggalang (respect), and bayanihan (cooperation) to balance digital immersion with moral development.

De Los Santos and Escote (2024) emphasized that parental expectations and family involvement shape learners' attitudes toward technology, often increasing pressure on teachers to incorporate digital tools while maintaining discipline.

Teachers report that communities expect schools to prepare learners for global competitiveness while preserving cultural identity, creating tension between modernization and tradition.

Institutional frameworks, including curriculum reforms, Department of Education (DepEd) policies, and ICT integration, shape teachers' lived realities.

The Philippine K-12 curriculum emphasizes 21st-century skills, requiring teachers to integrate digital literacy alongside traditional competencies. DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) were institutionalized, mandating ICT integration and professional growth. Guan and

Despi (2024) reported that teachers perceive technology integration as both enhancing engagement and creating distractions, requiring collaborative problem-solving and adaptability.

Access to devices and the digital divide between rural and urban schools profoundly affect teachers' experiences. Höfrová, Balidemaj, and Small (2024) noted that while Alpha learners are globally immersed in technology, disparities in access remain, particularly in rural schools. ICTS-EdTech initiatives in the Philippines aim to bridge gaps in connectivity and infrastructure, supporting "Last Mile Schools" with training and resources.

Pedagogical practices, including classroom management styles, teacher training, and professional development, directly shape teachers' lived experiences. Cimene *et al.* (2024) reported that Alpha learners' shortened attention spans and multitasking tendencies require adaptive management strategies such as scaffolding and blended learning. Global reviews emphasize that continuous training in digital pedagogy equips teachers with resilience and adaptive skills to manage technologically immersed learners.

The literature demonstrates that teachers' lived experiences in handling Generation Alpha learners are shaped by intersecting socio-cultural, institutional, technological, and pedagogical contexts. Filipino values and community expectations provide cultural grounding, while curriculum reforms and DepEd policies establish institutional frameworks. Technological disparities highlight challenges in access and equity, while pedagogical practices emphasize adaptive management and professional development. Together, these contexts reveal that teachers' experiences are not only defined by classroom interactions but also by broader cultural, institutional, and technological forces that demand resilience, innovation, and values-based adaptation.

Teachers' Future Perspectives

Teachers' self-perception in the digital era is closely tied to their digital competence and confidence in integrating technology into pedagogy. According to Tondeur *et al.* (2017), teachers who perceive themselves as digitally competent are more likely to adopt innovative practices that enhance student engagement. Similarly, Gudmundsdottir and Hatlevik (2018) found that teachers' self-efficacy in using digital tools strongly predicts their willingness to experiment with new instructional strategies. However, Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) emphasize that access to technology alone is insufficient; teachers' beliefs and perceptions about its pedagogical value are critical determinants of integration. Professional identity is increasingly understood as dynamic and shaped by contextual changes such as technological innovation and policy reforms. Beijjaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) argue that teacher identity is constructed through the interplay of personal values, professional roles, and societal expectations. Resilience, meanwhile, is essential for sustaining identity amidst challenges. Mansfield

et al. (2016) highlight that resilience is not merely an individual trait but is cultivated through supportive networks, mentoring, and reflective practice. During the COVID-19 pandemic, König *et al.* (2020) observed that the abrupt shift to remote learning tested teachers' resilience. However, many adapted by re-negotiating their professional identities as facilitators of digital learning environments.

Visions of Future Classrooms: AI, Gamification, and Hybrid Learning. Emerging technologies are reshaping visions of future classrooms. Holmes *et al.* (2019) note that artificial intelligence (AI) can support teachers by automating administrative tasks and providing personalized feedback. However, teacher agency remains central to the ethical and effective use of AI. Gamification has been shown to enhance motivation and persistence when aligned with clear learning objectives (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). Hybrid learning models, combining face-to-face and online modalities, have gained prominence, particularly during the pandemic. According to Dhawan (2020), hybrid approaches foster flexibility and continuity, but their success depends on coherent institutional support and equitable access to digital infrastructure.

Policy frameworks must evolve to support teachers in navigating digital transformation. Schleicher (2020) argues that professional development should move beyond one-off workshops toward sustained, practice-embedded learning communities. Moreover, equitable infrastructure investment is critical, as highlighted by Trust and Whalen (2020), who found that disparities in access to devices and connectivity exacerbate inequities in teaching and learning. Ethical considerations also require attention: Williamson and Piattoeva (2021) caution that AI-driven education policies must safeguard teacher autonomy, data privacy, and cultural relevance. Policies that align assessment systems with competencies such as collaboration, creativity, and digital citizenship are essential to encourage innovative practice.

The literature establishes that teachers' self-perception, identity, and resilience are central to their adaptation in the digital age. Future classrooms will likely integrate AI, gamification, and hybrid models, but these innovations must remain human-centered. Policy support is indispensable, particularly in ensuring equity, ethics, and sustained professional learning. However, gaps remain in longitudinal studies on how AI reshapes teacher identity, as well as in culturally grounded research on gamification and hybrid learning in rural contexts such as barangay schools in the Philippines.

Gaps in Literature

Despite the growing body of literature on Generation Alpha learners and their immersion in digital technologies, several research gaps remain, thereby warranting the conduct of this study.

Existing scholarship on teachers' lived experiences has largely focused on learners' behaviors in the digital age,

including attention span, socialization, and digital literacy (Prensky, 2017; Twenge, 2018). However, the voices of teachers themselves their lived experiences, struggles, and coping strategies are often underrepresented. In the Philippine context, although studies have examined information and communication technology (ICT) integration and classroom innovations Cruz, (2021), only a few have utilized phenomenological approaches that capture the human dimension of teaching, including emotional strain, adaptive pedagogy, and classroom management challenges encountered in daily practice. Consequently, there remains limited understanding of the personal realities of educators who stand at the forefront of digital-age classrooms.

Related literature also acknowledges the influence of sociocultural, institutional, technological, and pedagogical contexts on teachers' experiences Höfrová *et al.*, (2024). Nevertheless, these dimensions are frequently examined in isolation. Limited research has explored how these contexts intersect and collectively shape teachers' experiences in public elementary schools. For instance, teachers in rural areas often struggle with limited access to technological resources, whereas urban teachers face challenges related to learners' overexposure to digital devices. However, few studies have examined how these differing realities are connected to broader institutional policies and sociocultural expectations. This gap highlights the need for context-sensitive research that situates teachers' experiences within the complex interplay of cultural values, policy frameworks, and technological disparities.

Another significant gap concerns teachers' future perspectives. Existing literature on the future of education in the digital age is predominantly policy-driven or technology-centered, emphasizing innovations such as artificial intelligence, gamification, and hybrid learning models. However, teachers' own visions of their professional identity, resilience, and evolving roles remain insufficiently explored. Few studies have investigated how teachers perceive their future roles, prepare for educational changes, and balance technological innovation with meaningful human connection in the classroom. This gap underscores the importance of examining teachers' self-perceptions and aspirations, particularly within the Philippine public school system, where educational challenges are closely linked to socioeconomic and cultural realities.

Overall, while existing literature provides valuable insights into Generation Alpha learners' digital immersion and classroom behavior, there remains a critical lack of phenomenological and context-sensitive research that foregrounds teachers' lived experiences, the contexts shaping those experiences, and their future perspectives in public elementary schools. This study seeks to address these gaps by highlighting teachers' voices and connecting these dimensions through the lenses of Cognitive Load Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Phenomenology, thereby contributing to both local and

global understandings of teaching in the digital age.

Synthesis

The reviewed literature reveals three interconnected dimensions that illuminate teachers' experiences in handling the classroom behavior of Generation Alpha learners in the digital age within public elementary schools.

Teachers' lived experiences are characterized by emotional strain, adaptive pedagogy, and classroom management challenges. Briones and Escote (2023) found that Filipino elementary teachers often experience stress and fatigue due to learners' shortened attention spans and digital distractions. Similarly, Kumari *et al.* (2025) reported that teachers in India encounter behavioral challenges, including impatience and heightened sensitivity to digital stimuli, which necessitate the adoption of innovative instructional strategies. These studies underscore the emotional and professional labor teachers invest in balancing discipline with innovation in technology-driven classrooms.

The contexts in which teachers' experiences unfold are shaped by sociocultural, institutional, technological, and pedagogical realities. Cruz (2021) highlighted those Filipino teachers in rural schools face limited access to technological devices, while those in urban schools manage learners' overexposure to digital technologies, reflecting disparities in technological environments. Höfrová *et al.* (2024), in a systematic review, emphasized that institutional frameworks, such as curriculum reforms and information and communication technology (ICT) integration policies, are often implemented inconsistently, leaving teachers to navigate gaps in training and resources. In addition, sociocultural factors, including family structures and community expectations, further influence learners' digital habits and classroom behavior.

Teachers also envision themselves as adaptive professionals who will continue evolving alongside technological advancements. Briones and Escote (2023) noted that teachers anticipate future classrooms characterized by hybrid learning models and stronger ICT support systems. Likewise, Kumari *et al.* (2025) observed that teachers perceive their future roles as facilitators of digital literacy and providers of emotional support, balancing technological innovation with meaningful human connection. These perspectives highlight teachers' resilience and commitment to guiding learners toward responsible digital citizenship.

Taken together, these dimensions demonstrate that teachers' lived experiences, contextual realities, and future perspectives are deeply interconnected. Emotional strain and adaptive pedagogy cannot be fully understood apart from the sociocultural and institutional contexts in which they occur, nor from the evolving professional identities teachers envision for themselves in the digital age.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter outlines the research design, locale,

participants, instruments, procedures, and analytical strategies used in the study. A qualitative phenomenological approach was adopted to capture teachers' lived experiences in observing and managing the classroom behavior of Generation Alpha learners.

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design, specifically guided by Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology. This approach is appropriate because it seeks to uncover and describe teachers' lived experiences as they encounter, interpret, and respond to the classroom behaviors of Generation Alpha learners in the digital age. Phenomenology provides a systematic way to explore the essence of human experience by giving primacy to participants' voices, perceptions, and meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Through this design, the study captures rich, detailed narratives of behavioral patterns, digital influences, and everyday classroom interactions—elements that cannot be adequately understood through numerical indicators or surface-level descriptions (van Manen, 2016). By focusing on teachers' subjective meanings and reflections, phenomenology allows the research to reveal deeper insights into how Generation Alpha behaviors were experienced within the socio-cultural and educational context of Philippine public elementary schools, consistent with Patton's (2015) assertion that qualitative inquiry is essential for interpreting complex, contextualized human behavior.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Sto. Niño, South Cotabato, the smallest rural municipality in the province with 13 public elementary schools. Predominantly agricultural, the community relies on farming, while its schools play a vital role in providing accessible education and supporting local development.

The research focused on key public elementary schools within the district, including Sto. Niño Central Elementary School and several barangay-based schools such as San Isidro Elementary School, Ambalgan Elementary School, Sto. Niño Central Elementary School, M. Roxas Elementary School, and Panay Elementary School. These schools embody the Department of Education's commitment to inclusive, equitable, and quality learning by ensuring that every child has access to basic education, regardless of socioeconomic background.

In Sto. Niño District, teachers face 21st-century learning challenges with limited access to technology, while Generation Alpha learners show digital fluency but shorter attention spans and a preference for interactive learning. Unequal access to devices and connectivity creates a digital divide that shapes teaching strategies. This rural yet digitally influenced setting offers a relevant context for examining how teachers respond to learners' evolving behaviors.

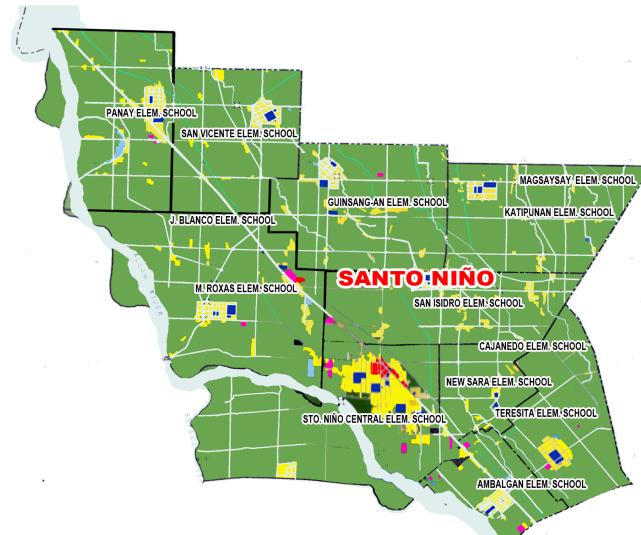


Figure 1: Map of Sto. Niño District as the Locale of the Study
 Source: *Sto. Niño Municipal Planning and Development Center (MPDC, 2025)*

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were nine (9) public elementary school teachers from Sto. Niño District, South Cotabato, who are currently handling Generation Alpha learners in Kindergarten to Grade 6. Participants were selected based on specific criteria: they must be currently teaching in public elementary schools, handling Generation Alpha learners, have at least three (3) years of teaching experience, and be willing to participate in in-depth interviews. The participants came from both central and barangay-based schools, ensuring varied yet relevant perspectives. The sample size is consistent with phenomenological research standards, which recommend 5 to 25 participants to achieve depth and data saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used in this study, a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are deliberately selected based on their relevance to the research phenomenon. This method is appropriate for qualitative phenomenological research because it ensures that participants have direct lived experience of the phenomenon being studied, allowing for rich and meaningful data collection (Dahal *et al.*, 2024; Bouncken *et al.*, 2025; Tajik *et al.*, 2024).

Research Instrument

The data sources in this research were the responses from participants, who were teachers from six (6) schools in the district and were willing to share their lived experiences integrating technology into teaching. The study, guided by Moustakas (1994), which highlights that phenomenological research questions should explore people's lived experiences, aiming to reveal the deeper meaning of what they go through rather than test hypotheses, adopted three research questions to develop more in-depth guiding questions for participants'

interviews. The probing questions underwent content validation by experts.

Additionally, the researcher used a semi-structured interview guide developed to elicit detailed, reflective narratives from public elementary school teachers. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate in phenomenological research because they allow participants to freely share their lived experiences while ensuring that the discussion remains aligned with the study's objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher used a cellular phone as a recording device and a video/audio recording application during an interview to ensure the reliability of the information and to capture all possible participant responses without transcription bias.

In addition to the primary tool, the researcher used instruments such as a questionnaire validation tool, interview protocols, an informed consent form, and a transcription writing guide.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before gathering data, the researcher asked permission from the Dean of the Graduate Schools of Sultan Kudarat State University to conduct the study. Once approval was granted, the researcher drafted a letter to the Schools Division Superintendent, the Public Schools District Supervisor, and the principals of the selected schools, requesting interviews with the elementary school teachers who handle Generation Alpha learners in grades K2 to 6.

The researcher then orients the participants to the study's specifics before the interview. During this time, participants can review and sign the informed consent form (ICF). Additionally, assurances regarding ethical principles, including anonymity and confidentiality, were provided to the participants. Providing participants with a preview of the interview increased the likelihood that they would provide truthful responses.

Further, an introductory meeting served as an excellent opportunity for the researchers to cultivate trust and confidence among the participants while also engaging in a discussion regarding the ethical implications of the research study through the completion of the consent forms.

To gather qualitative data and gain insight into the meanings individuals ascribe to behaviors, interviews were frequently used (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2021). Thus, to establish credibility and transferability, the researcher's interview guide undergoes validation by a panel of experts.

The researcher prepared recording applications and cellular phones for data analysis and transcription during the interview. The interview lasted approximately 30 to 90 minutes, during which the participants shared their experiences. Furthermore, interview scheduling was

determined by each participant's availability. Regardless of the circumstances, should the participants opt to terminate the interview due to traumatic experiences, the researcher, who was also the interviewer, immediately retains that information.

Moreover, the researcher employed member checking after the interview, following the method of Guba and Lincoln, as cited by Motulsky (2021). The researcher established rapport with the individual by using the information acquired. During the subsequent interview phase, the researcher sought to authenticate the collected data by thoroughly explaining the study's intricacies. This approach aimed to foster confidence and guarantee the validity and accuracy of the data obtained during the initial interview. Below is the flow of the data-gathering process.



Figure 2: Waterfall Diagram of the Data Gathering Instrument and Procedure

Data Analysis

In conducting data analysis, the researcher employed thematic analysis. According to Moustakas (1994), using ATLAS.ti. Thematic analysis: familiarization with the data, horizontalization (Initial Coding, clustering into themes, textural description (what was experienced), structural description (how it was experienced), and the essence of the phenomenon), and report production. It organized and described all data in detail. There were seven (7) steps covered in thematic analysis:

Familiarization with the Data. The researcher begins by importing transcripts, field notes, and other documents into ATLAS.ti. Through repeated reading, they immerse themselves in the data to gain a holistic understanding

of participants' lived experiences. During this stage, memo writing is used to capture initial impressions and reflections that guide the analysis.

Horizontalization (Initial Coding). Next, the researcher breaks the data into significant statements or meaning units. In ATLAS.ti, these segments are highlighted and coded, ensuring each statement is treated with equal importance. At this stage, no judgment is made—every experience is valued as part of the phenomenon under study.

Clustering into Themes. The researcher then groups related codes into categories that reflect shared meanings. Using ATLAS.ti's code groups and network tools, these codes are visually clustered to identify emerging themes.

The goal is to capture the essence of participants' experiences while noting any gaps or missing elements in the data.

Textural Description (What was experienced). Rich descriptions are developed to illustrate what participants actually experienced. Direct quotes from coded segments in ATLAS.ti are used to add authenticity and depth to these descriptions, ensuring participants' voices remain central.

Structural Description (How it was experienced). The researcher examines the context and conditions that shaped these experiences. In ATLAS.ti, codes are linked to contextual factors such as rural settings or digital divides. This step explores how circumstances influenced behaviors, perceptions, and interactions.

Essence of the Phenomenon. By integrating textural and structural descriptions, the researcher articulates the essence of the phenomenon. ATLAS.ti's visualization tools, such as networks and concept maps, help represent the core meaning. The final themes reflect both individual voices and collective patterns, offering a comprehensive understanding of the lived experience.

Producing the Report. The researcher prepares the report, presenting themes supported by participant quotes and ATLAS.ti outputs, such as code frequency tables and networks. The report highlights how these findings

contribute to understanding the lived experiences of Generation Alpha learners and their teachers, grounding the analysis in both data and context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. The Emerging Themes on the Lived Experiences of Teachers in Public Elementary Schools as they handle Alpha Generation Learners' Classroom Behavior Shaped by Digital technologies

Five (5) emerging themes were identified through a thorough analysis and interpretation of the data. They were all synthesized from eleven (11) formulated codes. These themes evolve One Hundred Sixteen (116) Frequency Count. The Five (5) emerging themes are as follows: Teaching Amid Digital Distraction and Technology-Driven Engagement; Technology as an Instructional Bridge and Engagement Tool; Transformation of Learner Behavior Through Social Media and Visual Learning; Teachers as Facilitators and Guides in the Digital Age; and Shared Responsibility in Guiding Learners' Digital Behavior.

These themes describe what teachers experienced in handling Alpha Generation learners influenced by digital technologies. The themes, codes, and frequency counts were derived from the phenomenological analysis, following Moustakas (1994), using ATLAS.ti.

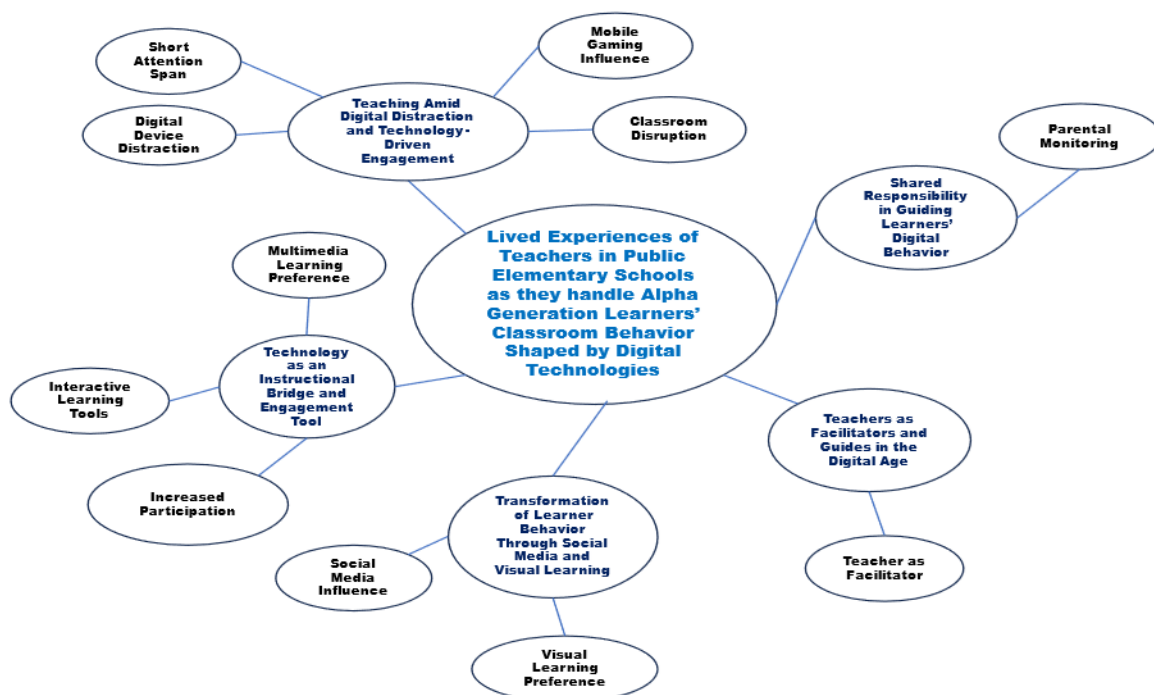


Figure 3: Schematic Diagram on the Lived Experiences of Teachers in Public Elementary Schools, as they handle Alpha Generation Learners' classroom behavior shaped by digital technologies

The study examined the lived experiences of teachers in public elementary schools in managing the classroom behavior of Alpha Generation learners within a digitally influenced learning environment. The findings revealed

five interrelated themes that reflect both the challenges and affordances of digital technology in classroom instruction.

(1) Teachers reported teaching amid digital distraction and

technology-driven engagement, where learners exhibited short attention spans, frequent gadget use, gaming behavior, and classroom disruptions. These factors were found to negatively affect focus, discipline, and sustained engagement, reflecting the impact of continuous exposure to fast-paced digital content. (2) Technology functions as an instructional bridge and engagement tool. Teachers emphasized that multimedia resources, interactive activities, and gamified instruction enhance learners' participation, motivation, and comprehension by aligning teaching strategies with students' digital preferences. (3) The transformation of learner behavior through social media and visual learning was evident. Learners tend to imitate online trends, language, and behaviors, while demonstrating a strong preference for visual and multimedia-based instruction, which influences their communication patterns and learning processes. (4) Teachers are increasingly positioned as facilitators and guides in the digital age. This reflects their evolving role from traditional knowledge transmitters to mentors who guide learners in the responsible use of technology and adapt instruction to digital learning contexts. (5) The study highlights shared responsibility in guiding learners' digital behavior, underscoring the critical role of parents in monitoring gadget use, regulating digital exposure, and reinforcing discipline at home in collaboration with schools.

Overall, the findings present a dual perspective of digital technology in education. While it contributes

to learner engagement and improved comprehension when properly integrated, it also introduces challenges related to distraction and behavioral management. These experiences are grounded in established theoretical frameworks, including Cognitive Load Theory, Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and the Digital Natives Framework, which collectively explain the dynamics of teaching and learning in a digitally mediated educational environment.

2. The Emerging Themes on the Contexts of Teachers' Lived Experiences in Public Elementary Schools Handling the Classroom Behavior of Alpha Generation Learners Shaped by Digital Technologies.

Four (4) emerging themes were identified after a thorough review and interpretation of the data. They were all created using fourteen (14) formulated codes. These codes evolve One Hundred Seven (107) Frequency Count. The Four (4) emerging themes are as follows: Technology-Enhanced Classroom Dynamics and Engagement; Parental and Family Influence on Students' Digital Behavior and Classroom Conduct, Digital Culture Influences Learners' Classroom Thinking and Behavior; and Emotional Context of Teaching Digital Learners. These themes, derived from the phenomenological analysis of teachers' lived experiences in handling Alpha Generation learners influenced by digital technologies, were identified. The themes describe what teachers experienced within the contexts of their classroom practices.



Figure 4 : Schematic diagram of the Contexts of Teachers' Lived Experiences in Public Elementary Schools Handling the Classroom Behavior of Alpha Generation Learners Shaped by Digital Technologies.

Handling the Classroom Behavior of Alpha Generation Learners Shaped by Digital Technologies.

The study identified four themes that describe the lived experiences of teachers in managing the classroom behavior of Alpha Generation learners within digitally mediated learning environments, highlighting the

influence of technology, family context, digital culture, and emotional experiences. (6) Technology-Enhanced Classroom Dynamics and Engagement reveals that digital technologies significantly enhance learner engagement, participation, and enthusiasm. However, these same technologies also contribute to restlessness,

hyperactivity, and difficulties in sustaining attention, particularly during traditional lecture-based instruction. Teachers noted the necessity of managing distractions while sustaining productive engagement in technology-rich classrooms. (7) Parental and Family Influence on Students' Digital Behavior and Classroom Conduct emphasizes that learners' classroom behavior is strongly influenced by their home environment. Inadequate parental supervision, excessive gadget use, and unstable family conditions were identified as contributing factors to poor discipline, reduced focus, and behavioral challenges in school, underscoring the importance of collaborative efforts between home and school. (8) Digital Culture Influences Learners' Classroom Thinking and Behavior indicates that learners exhibit heavy reliance on internet-based information, an expectation for instant responses, imitation of social media trends, and exposure to inappropriate online content. These factors shape learners' cognitive processes, communication styles, and classroom behavior, often affecting critical thinking and attentiveness. (9) Emotional Context of Teaching Digital Learners reflects the complex emotional experiences of teachers. While they experience satisfaction when technology facilitates improved learning and engagement, they also report frustration, concern, and discouragement due to behavioral issues, distractions, and increasing dependence on digital devices among learners. Collectively, the findings demonstrate that digital technologies create a dual impact within the classroom,

simultaneously enhancing engagement and generating behavioral and emotional challenges. These dynamics are explained through established theoretical frameworks, including Prensky's Digital Natives Framework, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, and Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory, which collectively elucidate the interplay between technology, environment, cognition, and teacher experiences in contemporary education.

3. The Emerging Themes explores how teachers in public elementary schools manage the classroom behavior of Alpha Generation learners envision their future.

Following meticulous evaluation and interpretation of procedural data, seven (7) emerging themes were identified. They were all composed of twenty (20) definitions and sixty-five (65) Frequency Counts. The seven (7) emerging themes are as follows: Teachers' Future Roles as Facilitators and Digital Guides, Continuous Learning and Professional Growth, Need for Greater Technological Competence, Adaptive and Flexible Teaching Approaches, Values-Oriented Teaching in the Digital Age, Anticipated Challenges and Emotional Experiences in Teaching, and Teachers as Partners in Shaping Learners' Futures.

The themes, corresponding codes, and frequency counts were derived from the phenomenological analysis of participants' narratives regarding their future roles as educators in the digital age.

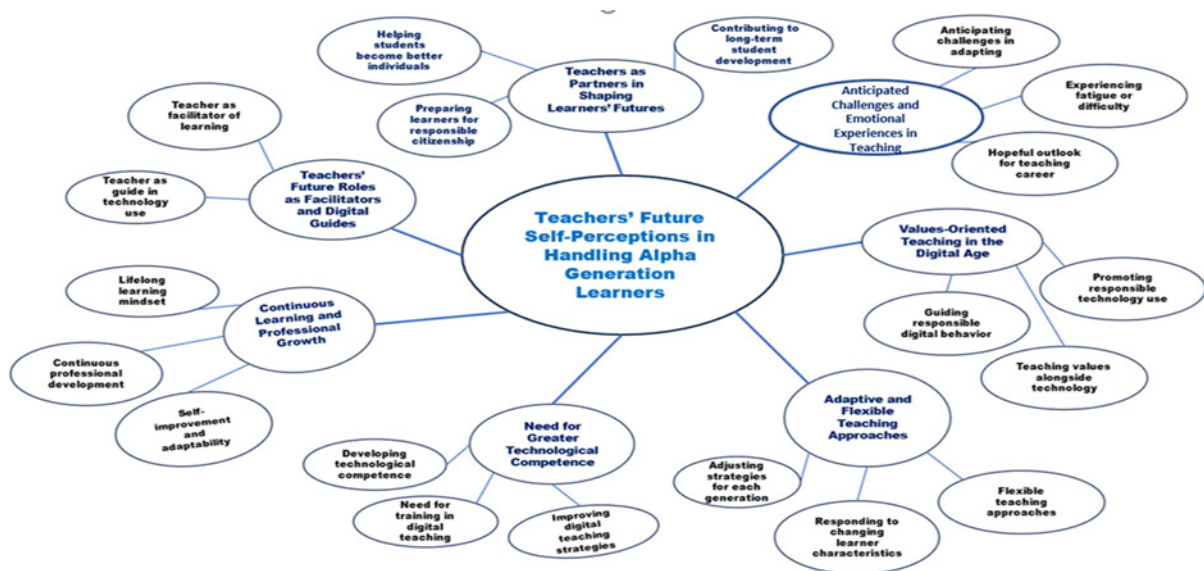


Figure 5: Schematic Diagram on How Teachers in Public Elementary Schools Handle Classroom Behavior of Alpha Generation Learners See Themselves in The Future.

The study identified several themes on how teachers in public elementary schools envision their future in handling Alpha Generation learners shaped by digital technologies.

Teachers see themselves as facilitators and digital guides (10) who support learning rather than solely transmit knowledge, emphasizing mentorship in responsible

technology use. They also highlight the importance of continuous learning and professional growth (11), viewing lifelong learning, training, and adaptability as essential to remain effective in rapidly changing digital environments. Closely related is the need for greater technological competence (12), where teachers recognize the necessity of improving digital skills and instructional strategies to effectively integrate technology in teaching while maintaining discipline and ethical guidance. Furthermore, adaptive and flexible teaching approaches (13) show that educators must continuously adjust strategies to meet the changing behaviors and needs of learners. The theme of values-oriented teaching in the digital age (14) emphasizes balancing technology use with moral and ethical instruction to develop responsible digital citizens. Meanwhile, anticipated challenges and emotional experiences in teaching (15) reflect teachers' expectations of stress, fatigue, and difficulty in adapting, although they remain hopeful and committed to their profession. Lastly, teachers as partners in shaping learners' futures (16) highlights their belief that education extends beyond academics to character formation, citizenship, and holistic development.

Overall, the findings reveal that teachers envision themselves as adaptive, technologically competent, and values-driven professionals who continuously grow while guiding learners toward responsible and meaningful participation in a digital society.

CONCLUSION

Teachers in public elementary schools experience both opportunities and challenges in handling Generation Alpha learners. While digital technologies increase engagement and participation, they also contribute to distraction, restlessness, and dependence on gadgets. As a result, teachers increasingly serve as facilitators and digital guides who balance technology integration with classroom discipline and meaningful learning.

Learners' behaviors are shaped by digital culture, online exposure, and family influence, making parental collaboration essential in promoting responsible digital behavior, focus, and critical thinking. Effective teaching therefore requires a balance between interactive technology, structured guidance, and values-based instruction.

Despite these challenges, teachers remain committed to continuous learning, technological competence, and adaptive teaching strategies to support the academic, personal, and social development of Generation Alpha learners in the digital age.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, several recommendations are offered to teachers, parents, schools, and policymakers to address the challenges and opportunities of teaching Alpha Generation learners in the digital age.

1. Teachers continuously strengthen their digital literacy

and teaching skills, making technology a tool for learning while keeping discipline and focus in the classroom.

2. Schools provide regular training on digital strategies and classroom management, helping teachers thrive in technology-rich environments.

3. Administrators create clear and consistent policies on gadget use and digital behavior, reducing distractions while ensuring technology supports engagement.

4. Parents and guardians guide learners' digital habits at home by monitoring gadget use, setting boundaries, and reinforcing responsible online behavior, building strong home-school collaboration.

5. Curriculum developers design interactive, technology-integrated materials that match Alpha Generation learners' attention patterns, while still nurturing critical thinking and values formation.

6. Researchers explore strategies that help teachers manage digital distractions and boost engagement, while studying the long-term effects of digital culture on learner behavior and academic growth.

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