Coping with Work Environment Challenges: Tales of Newly Hired Teachers

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Abstract:- The study delved into the experiences of newly hired teachers as they grappled with challenges within their work environment. The research involved eight teacher-participants who were newly hired educators in public elementary schools within the Compostela West District of the Davao de Oro Division. These participants were purposefully selected as informants. Thematic content analysis showed that the obstacles faced by newly hired instructors in transitioning to the work environment were instructional and classroom management. According to the data, these teachers struggled to determine the most effective instructional tactics and manage classroom dynamics. Meanwhile, the coping strategies employed by newly hired teachers were Asking help from mentors and co-teachers and adapting to work environment. Based on the challenges and coping strategies identified, the study proposed the following insights: Strengthen support to novice teachers and intensify mentorship. Providing technical and material resources to aid newly hired teachers were helpful for effective instructional strategies.

Keywords:- Coping, Work Environment Challenges, Newly Hired Teachers.

I. INTRODUCTION

The work environment holds significant sway over the well-being and engagement of individuals in the workplace. It typically encompasses the surroundings and atmosphere in which individuals carry out their duties and responsibilities. Within an educational setting, a positive, supportive, and conducive work environment is imperative for educators to effectively fulfill their roles. It would be inconceivable for a school, which serves as a model for character building, to be in a state of disarray.

In the delineation of the work environment, Oludeyi (2015) explicates that the work environment encompasses the settings, situations, conditions, and circumstances within which individuals engage in their professional activities. Meanwhile, Briner (2000) characterizes the work environment as comprising the physical setting (e.g., temperature, equipment), the attributes inherent to the job itself (e.g., workload, task complexity), broader organizational elements (e.g., culture, history), and even facets of the extraneous organizational setting (e.g., local labor market conditions, industry sector, work-home relationships).

The motivation and productivity of employees have been linked to the conditions in the work environment. According to Satyendra (2019), the quality of employees' work and their productivity levels are heavily influenced by the environment in which they work. A conducive workplace is essential for achieving expected results comfortably.

Meanwhile, a challenging work environment, according to Naik (2019), has a significant impact on employee performance, often leading to impairment. When an organization lacks aspects such as appreciation, effective management, and vital resources, the employee experience suffers. Inadequate equipment and resources directly contribute to subpar work productivity, but inadequate management inevitably leads to poor job performance. As a result, the office environment, as defined by Oludeyi (2015), comprises the interaction between employees and employers within a setting that can either be conducive or toxic.

In the educational milieu, newly hired or novice teachers consistently encounter challenges in the school environment, significantly undermining their motivation and teaching effectiveness. As highlighted by Al-Omari and Okasheh (2017), the unhealthy work environment strips teachers of the sense that their workplace is a second home, compelling them to adapt to an uncomfortable atmosphere. The multifaceted challenges and difficulties posed by students' diverse behaviors, their levels of motivation, and the weight of curriculum responsibilities represent the most formidable aspects for newly recruited educators during their inaugural year of service, as highlighted by Salandanan & Corpuz (2015).

Moreover, According to Chakrabarty et al. (2016), various factors can influence first-year teachers' effectiveness, including service delivery issues, student characteristics, school climate, support systems, teacher preparation, paperwork requirements, role ambiguity, and student behavioral difficulties. These elements can have a substantial impact on educators' attitudes and efficacy during their first year of service.

In a similar manner Llego (2017) asserts that lesson plan creation, administrators with a hard attitude, students with a negative attitude, overwork, over-expecting co-teachers, anxiety caused by difficulties encountered with teaching, paperwork, and other school activities are common struggles for new teachers in the Philippines. As a result, teachers have become demotivated due to workplace issues. Chang et.al (2016) argue that environment and challenging experiences not only impair the morale and efficacy of beginning teachers, but also lead a considerable proportion of them to quit from their profession. Zhang and Zeller (2016) concur that one of the primary causes of the present teacher shortage is increased teacher attrition, particularly among newly employed teachers.

In light of the challenges within the work environment, it is imperative for newly employed teachers to acclimate themselves to the existing system. The Department of Education's memorandum No. 43, issued in 2017, entitled "Teacher Induction Program Policy," delineates the qualifications of newly hired teachers as individuals with 0-3 years of experience in the public-school system. It also establishes the department's commitment to supporting their ongoing professional development. This program is designed to facilitate the well-being and professional advancement of new teachers during their initial years of service (Partlow, 2006).

Despite the ongoing efforts to support newly hired teachers through induction programs, fragments of work environments remain a dilemma in schools. Hence, this study endeavors to navigate deeper on the work environment challenges of the newly hired teachers and their coping mechanisms to face displeasing situations.

II. METHOD

This study examines the work environment challenges encountered by newly hired teachers and their strategies for managing them. The research design employed is qualitative phenomenology, which entails the collection and analysis of non-numerical data. According to Farber (2006) as cited in Buhl (2010), qualitative research seeks to attain a comprehensive understanding of the groups of people, environments, programs, events, or any phenomenon under study by closely engaging with the subjects.

The present study employs phenomenological research to elucidate the significance attributed by individuals to a given phenomenon. Phenomenology, as a research design, centers on comprehending the shared lived experiences within specific groups and examining the influence of a phenomenon on individuals to unveil the significance they assign to it. Its focal point is the observation of factual occurrences and features. As cited in Tomaszewski et al. (2020), Flood (2010) notes that the phenomenological approach to qualitative research concentrates on the fundamental elements of a lived experience or phenomenon, which can be perceived or felt by individuals from diverse perspectives.

In the course of a phenomenological study, the informants engaged in discussions regarding their observations and experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher utilized in-depth interviews as the primary method for gathering information. Participants offered both subjective and objective observations and opinions based on their individual experiences. The researcher focused on identifying common experiences and concepts raised by the participants when analyzing the collected data. As posited by Smith et al. (2009) as cited in Alase (2017), the primary objective of conducting interviews in phenomenological inquiry is to facilitate an interaction that enables participants to articulate their personal narratives in their own words.

In this study, eight (8) teacher-participants were involved, all of whom were newly hired teachers from Compostela West District. The participants were selected as informants through a process of drawing lots sampling. The main process involved comprehensive discussions, overlaying and connecting the findings, and creating meaning and color to the phenomenological inquiry. As per Singh (2003) cited in Noor et al. (2022), Simple Random Sampling is deemed the simplest and most common method of selecting a sample, wherein the sample is selected unit by unit, with equal probability of selection for each unit at each draw.

In addition, this phenomenological study involved conducting in-depth interviews with participants after obtaining their consent. Clear communication was established to ensure participants understood their ability to seek clarification on any aspect of the study. Prior permission to record conversations was obtained, and participants were assured that all information would be handled with the utmost confidentiality and solely used for academic purposes. The research strictly adhered to ethical principles encompassing respect for individuals, beneficence, justice, consent, and confidentiality.

As the principal investigator, it was my responsibility to produce robust research outcomes, involving the formulation of research inquiries, conducting interviews, and analyzing and transcribing the data. Thematic analysis was utilized to extrapolate categories, codes, and themes from the transcriptions, with a comprehensive examination of the themes to illuminate the study's investigation. Alase (2017) explained that the first step a researcher takes when beginning a data coding process is to read through the interview responses to identify common themes. They should look for words or phrases that are repeated in the participants' responses to condense the content of the transcript. The next step is to re-read each transcript or listen to any recording

devices for clarity. After reviewing the transcript multiple times, the researcher can likely identify some themes.

The process of categorizing significant statements of participants, as evidenced in verbal transcriptions, is a pivotal aspect of data analysis. Consequently, it necessitates the researcher's proficiency in interpreting and analyzing the data with precision. To ensure data accuracy, participants were involved in reviewing the transcriptions of every interview session. According to Patton (2002), through participant confirmation of findings and verification of the accuracy of interview session summaries, researchers can gain valuable insights into the accuracy, completeness, fairness, and validity of their data analysis as well as ensure that the right questions are being asked.

Throughout the research process, comparisons were made between observations and interview responses, information obtained from questionnaires, and insights shared by participants during interviews in order to assess consistency. Additionally, the study strictly adhered to ethical principles including respect for individuals, beneficence, justice, consent, and confidentiality. As the researcher, utmost dedication was given to the responsibility of generating dependable research findings.

In summary, this study has employed qualitative phenomenology. The process of gathering data from the participants was conducted meticulously, and the subsequent analysis and coding of the transcriptions has led to the emergence of themes that effectively encapsulate the findings of the study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The subsequent section presents the study's findings in the form of themes, which emerged following a thematic content analysis of the gathered data. The ensuing themes and findings discuss the challenges and coping strategies experienced by newly hired teachers in their work environment.

➢ *Instructional Challenges*
One of the challenges for newly hired teachers is adapting to the work environment in public elementary schools. In this study, it was observed that newly appointed teachers encountered challenges in delivering their instruction effectively. The findings underscore the importance of providing orientation and support to newly hired educators, thereby aiding them in acclimating to the dynamics of classroom teaching.

➢ *Classroom Management Challenges*
Newly hired teachers face the challenge of adapting to the work environment in public elementary schools, particularly in the area of classroom management. Classroom management involves the strategies and techniques teachers use to ensure that lessons run smoothly and without disruptions from students. Yalçınkaya (2002) highlights several challenges faced by newly hired teachers in classroom management, including lack of experience, difficulties in following the curriculum pace, dealing with students at different levels, managing time inside and outside the classroom, and understanding relevant legislation and student rights.

Meanwhile, Amidst the challenges of adapting to the work environment in public elementary schools, newly hired teachers have employed strategies to cope. The themes that emerged in coping with the challenging work environment were the following: Asking help from mentors and co-teachers and adapting to work environment:

➢ *Asking Help from Mentors and Co-Teachers*
In the face of challenges relating to classroom management and instructional delivery, newly appointed educators frequently turn to their mentors and co-teachers for assistance. The study participants found that they effectively navigated the demands of adapting to the work environment by seeking guidance from both their mentors and more seasoned colleagues. According to Feiman-Nemser (2003), a significant number of novice educators express a keen desire for sustained support, mentorship, and opportunities for professional development during their early years in the profession, with the expectation that much of this support will be forthcoming from their peers.

➢ *Adapting to Work Environment*
A helpful coping strategy for newly hired teachers adapting to the work environment in a public elementary school is to confront the challenges rather than fixating on the system's deficiencies. They are encouraged to embrace and adjust to the reality of their workplace, recognizing its distinctiveness. Rollins (2023) emphasizes that effectively managing workplace changes necessitates a combination of mindset, communication, adaptability, and self-care. By regarding change as an opportunity for growth, staying well-informed, fostering open communication, adjusting to new circumstances, and prioritizing self-care, individuals can navigate workplace changes more effectively.

Consequently, the study has produced valuable insights for newly appointed teachers. These include the importance of strengthen support to novice teachers and enhancing mentorship programs. The study asserts that in order to alleviate the challenges faced by newly appointed teachers, educational institutions must fortify the provision of comprehensive support for novice educators. This encompasses assistance from school administrators in the form of technical and material resources to aid newly appointed teachers in developing effective instructional strategies and adeptly managing their classrooms.

In summary, managing the challenges present in the work environment of public schools is a vital phase for newly recruited teachers. During the initial years of their tenure, these educators grapple with finding their niche in an entirely unfamiliar environment and implementing the most effective teaching strategies acquired during their academic and professional journeys. This novice phase necessitates guidance for coping with unfamiliar workloads and the inadequacy of school facilities and teaching equipment. A well-structured support system and proper mentoring are imperative to facilitate the adaptation of newly hired teachers to this environment. Incorporating the recommendations stemming from this study could lead to a promising adjustment and assimilation of novice teachers into the work environment.

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