

MINDORO JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL PUBLICATION OF THE OCCIDENTAL MINDORO STATE COLLEGE

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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

Mindoro Journal of Social Sciences and Development Studies (MJSSDS), a peer-reviewed journal, is the official publication of Occidental Mindoro State College published biannually. It aims to promote study and research that forge links between the social sciences and sustainable rural development. This journal is an interdisciplinary publication and welcomes articles from diverse theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, which engage and contribute to rural development. It also focuses on the significance, roles, and implications of various disciplines on rural societies and community development.



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AIMS AND FOCUS

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Educational and social transformation through leadership, culture, and inclusive practice

Artemio M. Gonzales Jr.

Editor, Mindoro Journal of Social Sciences and Development Studies

FROM THE EDITOR

In a rapidly changing educational and social landscape, the search for responsive, ethical, and inclusive systems continues to challenge institutions, educators, policymakers, and communities. This issue of the *Mindoro Journal of Social Sciences and Development Studies* brings together critical scholarly articles examining the dynamics of leadership, learning modalities, cultural identity, health beliefs, and institutional research culture. These contributions offer empirical insights and perspectives on inclusive and ethical societies in uncertain times.

Adapting to Disruptions and Virtual Learning

Educational systems continue to face disruptions brought about by technological shifts, socio-economic challenges, and evolving learner needs. The article “*Perceived Effectiveness and Encountered Difficulties on Virtual Learning Modality among Students of a State College in the Philippines*,” contributes to this discourse by empirically assessing the interplay between student demographics, perceived instructional effectiveness, and the nature of challenges experienced in an online learning environment. The findings clarify the nuanced dynamics of virtual learning implementation in state colleges. The study suggests that while online modalities can facilitate knowledge delivery, their success is dependent upon contextual factors and learner conditions that is beyond institutional control. As such, the study calls for the strategic virtual learning systems supported by evidence-based pedagogical frameworks,

Transformational educational leaders inspire educators

In the evolving landscape of basic education, school leadership and governance emerge as decisive forces in facilitating organizational change. The article “*Principal Leadership, Good Governance, and Teachers’ Commitment to Organizational Change*” offers empirical insights into how leadership behaviors and governance practices intersect with teacher engagement in reform initiatives. These findings emphasize the importance of shared leadership in educational settings, where empowering teachers through participatory governance facilitates a stronger sense of ownership and commitment to achieve common goals. Further, the study supports the need of designing leadership and governance frameworks that are not only transparent and ethical but also inclusive and contextually grounded.

Building Research Culture and Ethics in Higher Education

Research serves as the pillar of academic progress, yet it must be grounded in integrity. The study on “*Research Culture and Ethics of Faculty Researchers at the University Level*” brings attention to institutional and personal accountability in a research institution especially in higher education. Ethical and culturally grounded research practices driven by both institutional and personal motivations can elevate human potential and extend the impact of academic research beyond the university into the broader community. However, structural and institutional influences such as incentive mechanisms and recognition systems significantly affect research behavior. Therefore, promoting research integrity requires the unified commitment of all stakeholders to uphold public trust in the scientific community and safeguard the credibility of scientific work.

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Importance of Contextual Public Health Communication

Understanding public health issue requires not only scientific data but also attention to the socio-cultural and psychological contexts that individual decision. The article “*Attitudes toward COVID-19 Vaccination among Pregnant and Lactating Women in SAMARICA District, Occidental Mindoro*” applies the Health Belief Model to examine the vaccine intentions and hesitancies of a particularly vulnerable group. These findings emphasize the need for developing a context-sensitive public health communication strategy. Culturally responsive and empathetic communication plays a significant role in enhancing health literacy accessible, respectful, and relevant health information to diverse populations.

Aspirations and the Right to Relevant Indigenous Education

Equity in education must account for the unique contexts of indigenous communities. The study “*Batak Parents’ Challenges and Aspirations in Indigenous Education*” offers a compelling phenomenological account of the lived experiences of Batak parents in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, as they explore structural and cultural obstacles encountered by indigenous people communities within basic education system. These findings call attention to the urgent need for education systems to move beyond standardized, one-size-fits-all approaches. Culturally responsive pedagogy, localized curriculum development, and targeted resource provision are essential in ensuring that indigenous learners not only participate in education but thrive within it.

Grounding Inclusive Education

Inclusive education gains meaning when it is shaped by the lived realities of those implementing it on the ground. The article “*Voices from the Field: A Narrative Case Study on Inclusive Education*” captures the experiences of teachers across Davao. Through in-depth narratives the study explored how teachers interpret, adapt to, and advance inclusivity within their local teaching contexts. The study highlights necessity of bottom-up, evidence-informed approaches where inclusivity is not merely a mandate, but a lived commitment co-constructed by teachers, communities, and learners.

Reflection in this Issue

Collectively, the articles in this issue offer timely and relevant contributions to ongoing concerns in education, governance, public health, and research. The articles emphasizes that inclusive, ethical, and contextually grounded systems must be directly engaged in teaching, learning, community building, and knowledge production.

When innovation meets the island: A lesson in localized commercialization from Palawan

Maria Mojena Gonzales-Plasus

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INVITED EDITORIAL

In research circles, we often celebrate innovation whether in new tools, new technologies, fresh discoveries. And rightly so. But here's the hard truth: a lot of these breakthroughs don't make it out of the lab. Despite the best efforts of our universities and research institutions, many technologies never reach the people who need them most.

Nowhere is this disconnecting more evident than in agriculture and aquaculture. In these fields, the right innovation can change lives – helping farmers produce more, spend less, and adapt to a changing climate. But how do we get those technologies into the hands of real people, in real communities?

That's the problem the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) set out to solve when it launched the Agri-Aqua Technology Business Incubation (ATBI) Program in 2017. The idea was simple but powerful: build platforms inside universities that help turn research into real-world solutions, especially for rural communities. These "incubators" would support startups, small enterprises, and grassroots associations—not just corporations. The program now spans 25 locations across the country. But one incubator, in a province known both for its beauty and complexity, is doing things a little differently—and with remarkable impact (Eugenio, 2025).

Palawan, widely regarded as the Philippines' "last ecological frontier," It's a place where environmental protection is a daily concern, where tourism and food security often clash, and where local communities are constantly navigating the push and pull of progress (Haworth et. al., 2024). In this unique landscape, Western Philippines University–Agri-Aqua Technology Business Incubator (WPU-ATBI) has carved out a path that might just redefine how we think about technology commercialization.

Instead of chasing big corporate deals or waiting for the "perfect" commercial partner, WPU-ATBI chose to work with the institutions that are already in the community: local government units (LGUs) and non-government organizations (NGOs). Why? Because these are the people running livelihood programs, disbursing funds, listening to local voices—and most importantly, they're trusted.

This approach redefines conventional commercialization strategies. Rather than transferring technology to the highest bidder, it emphasizes context-responsive deployment engaging directly with communities and enabling them to maximize the value of locally available resources. Such a model underscores inclusivity, sustainability, and the democratization of innovation.

A perfect example? The floating oyster bag. It wasn't designed by an engineer or a scientist, but by Ryan Tennefrancia, a gym instructor with a knack for practical problem-solving. Using recycled plastic bottles and chicken wire, he came up with a simple, affordable way to farm oysters. With support from WPU-ATBI, the design was refined, filed for intellectual property protection, and rolled out to communities. Today, fisherfolk associations in Dumaran and Araceli are using it. The LGU of San Vicente even included it in their local livelihood programs (Plasus, 2024).

That's what innovation looks like when it's grounded in reality. It's low-cost. It's sustainable. And most of all, it's relevant (Allal-Cherif et. al., 2025).

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In places like Palawan, where people are constantly balancing preservation and progress, this kind of work isn't just useful—it's essential.

As we expand the Agriculture and Technology Business Incubator (ATBI) network, invest in incubator development, and sustain momentum for innovation, it is essential to reflect on the lessons exemplified by the WPU-ATBI. True success is not merely defined by the commercialization of technology, but by its strategic and thoughtful dissemination—anchored in local relevance, shared responsibly, and implemented with care. Ultimately, the most impactful innovations are those that transcend product development and effect meaningful, transformative change in people's lives.

Keywords: *agri-aqua innovation, agriculture, aquaculture, business incubation, sustainable development*

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She has contributed to several publications and has been involved in research and development initiatives that support coastal and riverine communities through science-based approaches. While her background is in aquaculture, her current work focuses on developing and promoting sustainable aquaculture technologies that aim to enhance livelihoods while helping protect marine and natural resources.

Perceived effectiveness and encountered difficulties encountered on virtual learning modality among students of a state college in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to identify the level of effectiveness and difficulties in online learning modality experienced by the students of Occidental Mindoro State College Mamburao Campus as well as relationship and differences between respondents' profile, perceived effectiveness and difficulties under the said modality. The study involved 339 students of Occidental Mindoro State College. The study is quantitative and descriptive in nature to which the data was gathered primarily using a self-made questionnaire distributed to the respondents via Google Forms. Findings revealed that the students' level of perceived effectiveness with regard to online learning modality is at a moderate level and deemed to be highest in terms of knowledge transfer and lacking in retention. Likewise, the students' level of difficulty in the said modality is in moderation but happened to have the highest in personal and community and least in institutional factors. On the other hand, the profile was found to have no significance with online learning's effectiveness while difficulty and effectiveness was found have profound effect with one another. Then, the profile of the respondents has nothing to do with the effectiveness of online mode of learning. Lastly, the study revealed that there is no significant difference in the perceived level of difficulty when grouped according to the students' age, sex, year level and program taken. Based from the findings, it is evident that online learning modality poses both advantages and disadvantages to learners and that the results may vary depending on various factors. From these, it concluded that online learning modality should be implemented thoughtfully and supported by robust pedagogical strategies, as needed in order to leverage the strengths of the said modality while mitigating its respective weaknesses.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Online learning has been widely used worldwide even before the pandemic and its use has long been regarded as part of the educational system. The thirst for the use of online learning was intensified as the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the educational landscape, forcing schools to switch to online classes in place of traditional face-to-face classes. In the Philippines, the plague has impacted approximately 27 million students, 1 million teachers and non-teaching staff, as well as learners' families (Paragas, 2021). Transitioning to online learning as part of distance learning became the most viable option so far as the world continues to grapple with the effects of this infectious and deadly disease, which has destabilized economies and claimed many lives (Baticulon et al., 2020).

In order to respond to the needs of the learners, the country has implemented proactive policies for the continuance of education despite the schools' closure due to the restrictions and community quarantine imposed on many areas, particularly in the country. The Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission

on Higher Education (CHED) having a population of 3.5 million students catered by approximately 2,400 HEIs in the Philippines have implemented online distance learning to allow students to continue their education (Oztok et al., 2013) where the teacher serves as a facilitator in online distance learning, enlisting learners' active participation through the use of various technologies accessed via the internet while they are geographically separated during instruction (Haleem et al., 2022).

Different higher learning institutions (HEIs) pivot to modified forms of online learning to concretize the government's stance to continue learning despite the pandemic (Joaquin et al., 2020). The Occidental Mindoro State College as one of the public higher education institutions in the Philippines and in the Province of Occidental Mindoro and the only one in the municipality of Mamburao need to adhere with the guidelines mandated by the order and is expected to uphold quality education despite the plague being experienced. Also, as per statement by the current Commission on Higher Education Chairman, Prospero De Vera III in accordance with the CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, Series of 2021, HEI's have already adopted a policy that "flexible learning" will continue in the current year and thereafter and will be the "new norm" and there is no going back to the old paradigm since the government has to do not want to risk the educational stakeholders if for instance another pandemic comes in and also because the government has already invested in technology, teachers' training and retrofitting of facilities for the new normal education. As a result, online learning became the "new normal" in education, and that every learner will be forced to adapt. However, online learning poses a number of difficulties for both students and teachers (Xia et al., 2022). This creates issues with regard to equity and access, as well as other impediments. Even more complicated is the fact that not every student can provide and adapt to the rapid advances in technology in today's education (Alvarez, 2020).

Presently, the locale where the research was conducted embraced the idea of online learning. However, students have been struggling to cope with the demands of online learning and it strongly suggests that the students' learning is limited due to certain circumstances. Many students and groups have called for an academic freeze as the country fights this catastrophe (Tiro & Lusung-Oyzon, 2023). Also, it is pointed out that the pandemic has affected their household budget and as a result, it has created more problems for people's accessibility, particularly for those who live in remote areas and for students from minority groups who attend the institution (Dayagbil et al., 2021). Furthermore, despite the fact that much research had been done on online distance learning prior to the pandemic, its use had yet to be thoroughly investigated due to the scarcity of resources. In addition, there is a paucity of local literature on the topic of student concentration in online classes (Amir et al., 2020).

This has prompted the researcher to conduct a study that would identify the obstacles that the students of Occidental Mindoro State College are facing in the use of virtual learning and how these challenges can be addressed by providing recommendations that may help mitigate anticipated negative outcomes. By analyzing these profile variables, the study seeks to identify factors affecting student concentration in online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding these difficulties can serve as an "eye-opener" for the institution, highlighting the diverse needs of its students. The findings of this study may contribute to the enhancement of quality education during times of crisis, ultimately transforming the "new normal" into a "better normal" for online learning. Specifically, this study aims to students' perceptions of the extent of their experienced challenges in the online distance learning modality.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Design

This study utilized a descriptive research design to determine and analyze the relationship and differences between students' perceived level of effectiveness and difficulty in the online learning modality, categorized according to their profile variables.

2.2. Sample

The study respondents consisted of students enrolled at Occidental Mindoro State College – Mamburao Campus in the following degree programs: Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (BEEd), Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Management, Major in Financial Management (BSBA-FM) and Operations Management (BSBA-OM), Bachelor of Science in Office Administration (BSOA), and Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) during the Second Semester of Academic Year 2021–2022. To determine the appropriate sample size, the Raosoft online application was used, calculating the sample from a total student population of 2,885, with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. The study employed stratified proportional random sampling to ensure a representative selection across programs. The final sample consisted of 77 out of 646 students (22.63%) from BEEd, 115 out of 971 students (34.01%) from BSBA-FM, 32 out of 273 students (9.56%) from BSBA-OM, 34 out of 284 students (9.95%) from BSOA, and 81 out of 681 students (23.85%) from BSIT.

2.3. Research Instrument

A self-made survey questionnaire served as the primary instrument in this study. It was developed through a comprehensive review of relevant literature, including books, journals, articles, and online sources related to the study variables.

A 4-point Likert scale was utilized, with distinct verbal interpretations assigned to each point for both effectiveness and difficulty dimensions. The questionnaire underwent content validation by three experts in the fields of research, statistics, and grammar. Using a content validity checklist, each item was assessed for clarity and relevance. The content validity index (CVI) for both the effectiveness and difficulty domains was 1.0, indicating excellent content validity in accordance with Polit and Beck (2006).

To ensure reliability, the instrument was pilot tested with 20 randomly selected students from Occidental Mindoro State College – Mamburao Campus, who were not part of the actual study. Internal consistency was computed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding values of 0.965 for effectiveness and 0.904 for difficulty – both indicating high reliability. Thus, the instrument was deemed both valid and reliable for data collection.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to the conduct of the study, the researcher sought approval by sending a formal letter to the concerned officials of Occidental Mindoro State College – Mamburao Campus. Permission was granted through coordination with the Campus Director and the Director for Instruction to distribute the questionnaires and collect data from students under their supervision.

Once all necessary documents were prepared, the researcher administered the survey through Google Forms. Any unclear items were clarified through online messaging. All responses were recorded, tallied, and subsequently analyzed.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

In adherence to Republic Act No. 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, all data collected were treated with strict confidentiality. Personal information was anonymized, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to their participation in the study. Furthermore, ethical guidelines were followed to ensure transparency, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. The study also adhered to research integrity principles, ensuring that findings were reported accurately and objectively, free from bias or misrepresentation.

2.6. Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage were used to describe students' profiles based on age, sex, year level, and program, while mean was employed to determine students' perceived levels of effectiveness and difficulty in the online learning modality. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was utilized to assess significant relationships between variables.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Students' Perceived Level of Effectiveness of Online Learning Modality

The results indicate that students perceive online learning as moderately effective (mean=2.59). Among the different aspects assessed, retention had the lowest rating (mean = 2.44), indicating a lower perceived effectiveness in this area. However, all other factors were experienced at a moderate level [Table 1].

Table 1. Students' perceived level of effectiveness in using online learning modality.

FACTORS	OVERALL MEAN
Knowledge transfer	2.64
Retention	2.44
Motivation	2.63
Engagement	2.63
Grand Mean	2.59

Scale: 1.00-1.50 Not Effective at All; 1.51-2.50 Slightly Effective; 2.51-3.00 Moderately Effective; 3.51-4.00 Very Effective

3.2. Level of Difficulty Faced by the Students with Regard to Online Learning Modality

The results indicate that students experience a moderate level of difficulty in online learning modality (mean=2.75). The results show that most of the identified factors contribute significantly to the challenges encountered in online learning, with varying degrees of difficulty [Table 2].

Table 2. Level of difficulty faced by the students with regard to online learning modality.

FACTORS	OVERALL MEAN
Technological	2.61
Personal	2.92
Domestic	2.80
Social	2.78
Institutional	2.49
Community	2.92
Grand Mean	2.75

Scale: 1.00-1.50 Very Low; 1.51-2.50 Low; 2.51-3.50 High; 3.51-4.00 Very High

3.3. Correlates of the Level of Perceived Effectiveness of Online Learning Modality

This study found that the year level of the students is significantly correlated to their level of perceived effectiveness of online learning modality in terms of knowledge transfer ($r=-.128$, $p=.018$), retention ($r=-.127$, $p=.019$), and engagement ($r=-.144$, $p=.008$). This means the students who belong on the lower year level tend to perceive that online learning modality is effective in terms of knowledge transfer, retention, and engagement. Therefore, the first null hypothesis of the study is accepted [Table 3].

Table 3. Correlation between the demographic profile and level of perceived effectiveness of online learning modality.

PROFILE	KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER		RETENTION		MOTIVATION		ENGAGEMENT	
	r	p-value	r	p-value	r	p-value	r	p-value
Age	.036	.508	.025	.653	.025	.648	-.017	.758
Sex	.002	.972	.033	.539	-.023	.679	.017	.759
Year level	-.128*	.018	-.127*	.019	-.089	.102	-.144**	.008
Program	-.033	.545	-.067	.218	-.019	.722	-.057	.292

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.4. Correlation between the Level of Perceived Effectiveness and the Level of Difficulty Faced by the Students in Online Learning Modality

Results shows that there is a significant relationship between the level of perceived effectiveness and the level of difficulty faced by the students in online learning modality ($r=.217$, $p<0.001$). Investigating each factor of the variables, the level of perceived effectiveness of the learning modality in terms of knowledge transfer is significantly correlated to level of difficulty faced by the students in online learning modality in terms of technological barriers ($r=.392$, $p<0.001$), domestic barriers ($r=.278$, $p<0.001$), and community barriers ($r=.160$, $p=.003$). On the other hand, the level of perceived effectiveness of the learning modality in terms of retention is found to have relationship with the level of difficulty faced by the students in online learning modality in terms of technological barriers ($r=.348$, $p<0.001$) and domestic barriers ($r=.187$, $p=.001$). In addition, the results reveal that the level of perceived effectiveness of the learning modality in terms of motivation has relationship with the level of difficulty faced by the students in online learning modality in terms of technological barriers ($r=.408$, $p<0.001$), domestic barriers ($r=.270$, $p<0.001$), and community barriers ($r=.190$, $p<0.001$). Finally, in terms of engagement, the level of perceived effectiveness of the learning modality is correlated to the level of difficulty faced by the students in online learning modality in terms of technological barriers ($r=.395$, $p<0.001$), domestic barriers ($r=.321$, $p<0.001$), social barriers ($r=.118$, $p=.030$), institutional barriers ($r=.118$, $p=.030$), and community barriers ($r=.159$, $p=.003$) [Table 4].

EFFECTIVENESS	TECHNOLOGICAL		PERSONAL		DOMESTIC		SOCIAL		INSTITUTIONAL		COMMUNITY	
	r	p	r	p	r	p	r	p	r	p	r	p
Knowledge Transfer	.392**	<0.001	.067	.221	.278**	<0.001	.080	.143	.025	.649	.160**	.003
Retention	.348**	<0.001	.004	.948	.187**	.001	-.022	.683	.040	.460	.079	.149
Motivation	.408**	<0.001	.092	.089	.270**	<0.001	.104	.056	.084	.122	.190**	<0.001
Engagement	.395**	<0.001	.048	.382	.321**	<0.001	.118*	.030	.118*	.030	.159**	.003

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4. DISCUSSION

The results indicate that students perceive online learning as moderately effective. These findings suggest that students find online learning particularly effective in terms of knowledge transfer, motivation, and engagement. Online learning provides frequent access to updated knowledge and fosters peer engagement and collaboration through modern digital tools, which enhance active learning (Madanat et al., 2024). However, the findings also highlight a challenge in retention, as students reported a lower level of effectiveness in this aspect. This aligns with the study of Zeglen & Rosendale (2018), which found that while online education is becoming more prevalent in higher education, retention remains a persistent challenge in online instructional methods.

Among all the factors, personal and community challenges were reported as the most significant difficulties. The abrupt shift to remote education has caused heightened stress and mental health challenges, making it difficult for students to cope with the sudden change (Mosleh et al., 2022). Community-related difficulties were largely attributed to frequent power outages, which directly impact students' ability to engage in their academic activities. Power supply issues in the province are inadequate, intermittent, and unreliable, significantly disrupting students' productivity in online learning (Owolabi et al., 2024).

In terms of domestic challenges, students reported experiencing distractions and household responsibilities, which hinder their ability to focus on online classes. Barrot et al. (2021) highlighted that studying from home exposes students to numerous interruptions, making sustained concentration difficult. Students also faced moderate difficulty due to social factors, primarily because online learning limits face-to-face interaction, reducing opportunities for peer engagement and social support. Additionally, technological barriers remain a pressing concern, as many students struggle with issues related to the digital divide – the gap between those with adequate internet access and learning devices and those with limited or no access. This digital disparity continues to affect students' participation and academic performance.

On the other hand, institutional difficulties were reported at a moderate level suggesting that schools have made necessary adjustments to support students in the new normal of education. Yuen et al. (2023) noted that while the pandemic posed inevitable challenges, it also encouraged autonomy among students and teachers. Schools have adapted by implementing resource-management strategies tailored to individual learning needs, facilitating a smoother transition to remote education.

The study shows that the length of stay in the higher education program is correlated with perceived effectiveness of online learning modality. This is in opposition with the study of Pham and Huynh (2018) which says that online learning has a favorable impact on online learning modality. However, the efficiency of the training varies depending on the program used. According to the study, computer-related programs were more effective than other business administration courses. However, other demographic variables such as age and gender of using the online learning modality had no effect on learning and transferring knowledge which is in opposition to the findings of the study of Byars-Winston et al. (2017) which revealed that the students' year level could significantly predict online learning outcomes and perceived effectiveness whereas the effect of gender on online learning outcomes and perceived effectiveness is debatable.

Lastly, it was found out that the more the students perceive that learning modality is effective, the more they experience difficulty in learning using the modality. There is a significance seen between the variables which is backed up by the study of Akpen et al. (2024) which stated that perceived effectiveness with regard to the use of online learning in the students' learning depends on their experience, positive experiences because positive results while negative causes negative outcomes. So, Mailizar et al. (2020) highlighted that the challenges and opportunities associated with e-learning must be understood conforming to diverse students' nature.

Similarly, retention, motivation, and engagement in online learning are linked to various challenges, including technological, domestic, and community difficulties. These findings indicate that for online learning to be effective, institutions need to address these barriers by improving infrastructure, providing support, and adapting teaching strategies to meet students' needs.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, students perceive the effectiveness of online learning as moderate, with knowledge transfer, motivation, and engagement being the most positively impacted. However, retention remains a challenge, suggesting that while online learning is effective in certain areas, improvements in instructional design, interactivity, and assessment strategies are necessary to enhance long-term learning outcomes.

The effectiveness of online learning modality may be further enhanced by the institution through providing an educational setting which can suffice learning that is tantamount to what traditional face to face classes may offer in order to achieve a higher efficacy rate. Though the difficulty is manageable, the teachers may further explore technological means in learning that requires a lesser Internet bandwidth for students who are technologically challenged to maximize resources available online and seek to establish connection

and socialization in the virtual world, make an effort to build rapport with the students' parents/guardians and find alternative ways to be done in case of technical difficulties and power interruptions. Also, students may be given "eye-opening" inputs on how they can effectively manage their time in accomplishing their school work to avoid excessive cognitive load. It is imperative that the school and its teachers continue their academic endeavors and continue to seek opportunities in online education that foster student learning amidst the plague being experienced. Despite the fact that the level of perceived effectiveness and difficulty of the students is at an average level, the school and its teachers may further amplify online learning efficacy and further alleviate level of difficulty, the school and its teachers are encouraged to provide the students with independent learning tools which would supply them additional knowledge and enrichment opportunities.

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Principal leadership, good governance, and teachers' commitment to organizational change

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between principal leadership, good governance, and teachers' commitment to organizational change. Specifically, it aims to identify which indicators of principal leadership and governance significantly influence teacher commitment to change initiatives. A total of 100 teachers across ten public elementary schools in Caluya, Antique, participated in the study. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected through a researcher-constructed survey questionnaire to systematically measure perceptions of leadership, governance, and commitment to change. The findings revealed a positive correlation between teachers' perceptions of principal leadership and their commitment to change, suggesting that effective leadership fosters stronger engagement in change initiatives. Similarly, good governance practices, particularly participatory decision-making, were identified as influential in strengthening teachers' commitment. Interestingly, while principal leadership as a whole did not significantly predict commitment levels, the governance aspect of participatory decision-making emerged as a notable predictor.

The study underscores the critical role of inclusive governance practices in enhancing teacher commitment during organizational change. The findings contribute to the body of knowledge in educational leadership by offering empirical evidence on the dynamics of school governance and leadership in shaping change readiness. These insights hold practical implications for school leaders and policymakers in designing context-responsive leadership and governance frameworks. Future research is recommended to expand the scope and address the study's limitations by exploring additional variables and applying the model in varied educational settings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the 21st century, the effective implementation of change stands as a formidable challenge for leaders across various sectors. Within academic institutions, this challenge is compounded by the need to navigate technological advancements, societal shifts, economic developments, and policy reforms (Groenewald, et al., 2024).

Central to the success of educational reforms is the commitment of teachers to organizational change. As frontline implementers, their dedication is pivotal in ensuring the effective execution and sustainability of reforms. Recent efforts by the Department of Education in the Philippines to overhaul the education system underscore the critical role teachers play in driving change. Bading (2022) echo these sentiments, highlighting the significant contribution of committed teachers to the success of change initiatives.

However, the extent of teachers' commitment to organizational change is influenced by various factors, with leadership being paramount among them. Principals, in particular, wield significant influence over the culture, direction, and effectiveness of educational institutions. Meyer et al. (2023) emphasize the multifaceted nature of principal leadership, which extends beyond mere administrative duties to shape teachers' commitment to navigate and embrace change. Transformational leadership, characterized by vision-building, individualized support, and intellectual stimulation, has been shown to positively impact teachers' motivation and commitment to organizational goals.

Furthermore, the importance of good governance cannot be overstated in fostering an environment conducive to change. Effective governance dictates how institutions operate, make decisions, and engage with stakeholders, thereby influencing teachers' commitment to organizational change. Participatory decision-making, transparency, and accountability are key governance practices that can enhance teachers' sense of ownership and alignment with institutional objectives (Sari, 2023).

Despite the acknowledgment of the pivotal role of leadership and governance, empirical studies reveal gaps in understanding the precise mechanisms through which they impact teachers' commitment to change. For instance, while transformational leadership has been linked to increased organizational commitment, the mediating effects of teachers' beliefs and professional learning remain underexplored. Additionally, the interplay between authentic leadership, teacher well-being, and social-emotional competence warrants further investigation to fully comprehend their collective impact on commitment levels.

As the study aimed to explore how principal leadership and good governance influence teachers' commitment to organizational change, it pursued several specific objectives. First, it sought to determine the predominant leadership style of school principals as perceived by teachers, focusing on three dimensions: transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and instructional leadership. Second, the study aimed to assess the extent to which principals implement good governance practices, as experienced by teachers, particularly in the areas of transparency and accountability, participatory decision-making, responsive public service, and sustainable resource allocation. Third, it intended to evaluate the level of teachers' commitment to organizational change, categorized into affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Furthermore, the study sought to examine whether a significant relationship exists between the predominant principal leadership style and the teachers' level of commitment to organizational change. It also aimed to determine if the extent of principals' implementation of good governance significantly correlates with teachers' commitment levels. Lastly, the study aspired to identify which specific indicators of principal leadership and good governance significantly predict teachers' commitment to organizational change.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to systematically gather, analyze, and interpret data on principal leadership, good governance practices, and teachers' commitment to organizational change in the educational context without manipulation. This approach aimed to provide a detailed account of these variables' current state, offering insights into prevailing leadership styles, governance practices, and commitment levels.

2.2. Study Site

The study encompassed a diverse array of public elementary schools in Caluya, Antique, Philippines, including Caluya Central School, Dawis Elementary School, Sabang Elementary School, Salamento Elementary School, Imba Elementary School, Hiningaan Elementary School, Banago Elementary School, Semirara Elementary School, Masanag Elementary School, and Sibato Elementary School. Aligned with the mandates of the Department of Education (DepEd), these schools adhere to various programs and policies aimed at addressing evolving educational demands and challenges, necessitating continuous adaptations in their processes and operations.

2.3. Sample

In order to achieve meaningful research insights, the study aimed to engage 100 respondents from a larger population of 134 teachers distributed across ten (10) public elementary schools in Caluya, Antique. The determination of the sample size followed a meticulous approach using Raosoft, an online sample size calculator, incorporating a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and an assumed 50% response distribution. To ensure a balanced and unbiased representation across all schools, the researcher adopted a proportional random sampling method, meticulously allocating the sample size based on the proportion of teachers in each school.

2.4. Research Instrument

To gather data, the researcher designed a comprehensive survey questionnaire utilizing a 5-point Likert scale, with items drawn from relevant literature to ensure content validity. The questionnaire was structured into three main sections to assess the perceived extent of principal leadership, good governance, and teachers' commitment to organizational change. The section on principal leadership evaluated transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership styles, totaling 21 items. Good governance indicators including accountability, transparency, participatory decision-making, and resource allocation comprised 28 items. The third section explored affective, continuance, and normative commitment, totaling 21 items. To ensure the reliability and clarity of the instrument, expert validation was conducted by professionals in educational management, followed by pilot testing with a representative sample. Based on the results of the pilot test, the instrument yielded high internal consistency: the Cronbach's alpha was 0.91 for the principal leadership section, 0.89 for good governance, and 0.93 for teachers' commitment to organizational change, indicating that the questionnaire was highly reliable for the purposes of this study.

2.5. Data Gathering Procedure

After obtaining necessary permissions, the researcher secured cooperation from School Principals and informed potential respondents about the study's purpose, overview, and ethical considerations. Teachers were provided with comprehensive information and gave informed consent for voluntary participation. The survey was administered, allowing thoughtful responses, and data underwent rigorous analysis to explore relationships between principal leadership, good governance, and teachers' commitment to organizational change. Findings were presented, conclusions drawn, and practical recommendations provided, all while adhering to ethical standards.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

In conducting this research, the highest ethical standards were upheld, with the researcher ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality for all participants, particularly the teachers in the selected public elementary schools in Caluya, Antique. Rigorous measures were implemented to protect personal information, and findings were reported in an anonymized manner. The researcher also committed to the responsible and ethical use of collected data, adhering strictly to outlined research objectives to maintain trust, integrity, and prioritize participants' well-being and rights throughout the study.

2.7. Data Analysis

The gathered data underwent comprehensive analysis using statistical software. Weighted mean was utilized to assess average perceptions of principal leadership, good governance, and teachers' commitment to organizational change, alongside a measure of data variability. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to explore interrelationships between these variables, offering robust measures of linear associations. Multiple linear regression analysis played a pivotal role in identifying specific dimensions of principal leadership and good governance influencing teachers' commitment.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Extent of Principal Leadership

The results indicate that the perception of principal leadership is high ($3.68 \pm .377$) among teachers responded in the study. It also shows high perception on other specific leadership dimensions [Table 1].

Table 1. Extent of principal leadership as perceived by the teachers.

Scale	Overall Mean	SD
Transformational leadership	3.69	.377
Instructional leadership	3.68	.411
Distributed leadership	3.67	.410
Overall result	3.68	.377

Scale: 1.00-2.00 Low; 2.01-3.00 Moderate; 3.01-4.00 High

3.2. Principals' Implementation of Good Governance

All governance factors rated high ($3.68 \pm .337$). Participatory decision-making ($3.73 \pm .340$), transparency and accountability ($3.68 \pm .400$), responsive public service ($3.65 \pm .406$), and sustainable resource allocation ($3.65 \pm .392$) were also rated as high [Table 2].

Table 2. Extent of principals' implementation of good governance as experienced by the teachers.

Factors	Mean	SD
Participatory decision-making	3.73	.340
Transparency and accountability	3.68	.400
Responsive public service	3.65	.406
Sustainable resource allocation	3.65	.392
Overall Result	3.68	.337

Scale: 1:00-2:00 Low; 2:01-3:00 Moderate; 3:01-4:00 High

3.3. Level of Teachers' Commitment to Organizational Change

Teachers participated in this study has high commitment to organizational change ($3.73 \pm .325$). Affective commitment ($3.77 \pm .359$) and normative commitment ($3.77 \pm .365$) received the highest ratings, followed by continuance commitment ($3.65 \pm .392$), which was also rated as high. [Table 3].

Table 3. Level of teachers' commitment to organizational change.

Factors	Mean	SD
Affective commitment	3.77	.359
Normative commitment	3.77	.365
Continuance commitment	3.65	.392
Overall Result	3.73	.325

Scale: 1:00-2:00 Low; 2:01-3:00 Moderate; 3:01-4:00 High

3.4. School Principal Leadership and the Level of Teachers' Commitment to Organizational Change

Results demonstrate significant relationships between the extent of school principal leadership and the level of teachers' commitment to organizational change. Across all leadership dimensions, including transformational, distributed, and instructional leadership, there are notable correlations with affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Specifically, transformational leadership shows significant correlations with affective ($r = .455$, $p < .001$), continuance ($r = .523$, $p < .001$), and normative commitment ($r = .311$, $p = .002$). Similarly, distributed leadership exhibits significant correlations with affective ($r = .420$, $p < .001$), continuance ($r = .576$, $p < .001$), and normative commitment ($r = .287$, $p = .004$). Instructional leadership also demonstrates significant correlations with affective ($r = .408$, $p < .001$), continuance ($r = .574$, $p < .001$), and normative commitment ($r = .321$, $p = .001$). Moreover, the overall extent of principal leadership significantly correlates with teachers' commitment to organizational change ($r = .546$, $p < .001$), indicating a strong association between effective leadership and teachers' commitment to embracing organizational change [Table 4].

Table 4. Relationship between the extent of school principal leadership and the level of teachers' commitment to organizational change.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Correlation Coefficient	p-value
Transformational leadership	Affective commitment	.455**	< .001
	Continuance commitment	.523**	< .001
	Normative commitment	.311**	.002
Distributed leadership	Affective commitment	.420**	< .001
	Continuance commitment	.576**	< .001
	Normative commitment	.287**	.004
Instructional leadership	Affective commitment	.408**	< .001
	Continuance commitment	.574**	< .001
	Normative commitment	.321**	.001
Principal's leadership	Teachers' commitment to organizational change	.546**	< .001

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.5. Principals' Implementation of Good Governance and the Level of Teachers' Commitment to Organizational Change

Results show that across all indicators of good governance, including transparency and accountability, participatory decision-making, responsive public service, and sustainable resource allocation, significant correlations are observed with affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Specifically, transparency and accountability exhibit significant correlations with affective ($r = .408$, $p < .001$), continuance ($r = .585$, $p < .001$), and normative commitment ($r = .287$, $p = .004$). Similarly, participatory decision-making shows significant correlations with affective ($r = .516$, $p < .001$), continuance ($r = .679$, $p < .001$), and

normative commitment ($r = .406$, $p = .004$). Responsive public service demonstrates significant correlations with affective ($r = .484$, $p < .001$), continuance ($r = .546$, $p < .001$), and normative commitment ($r = .295$, $p = .003$). Additionally, sustainable resource allocation exhibits significant correlations with affective ($r = .435$, $p < .001$), continuance ($r = .505$, $p < .001$), and normative commitment ($r = .293$, $p = .003$). Moreover, the overall extent of principals' implementation of good governance significantly correlates with teachers' commitment to organizational change ($r = .626$, $p < .001$), underscoring the importance of effective governance practices in fostering teachers' commitment to embracing organizational change [Table 5].

Table 5. Relationship between the extent of principals' implementation of good governance and the level of teachers' commitment to organizational change.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Correlation Coefficient	p-value
Transparency and accountability	Affective commitment	.408**	< .001
	Continuance commitment	.585**	< .001
	Normative commitment	.287**	.004
Participatory decision-making	Affective commitment	.516**	< .001
	Continuance commitment	.679**	< .001
	Normative commitment	.406**	.004
Responsive public service	Affective commitment	.484**	< .001
	Continuance commitment	.546**	< .001
	Normative commitment	.295**	.003
Sustainable resource allocation	Affective commitment	.435**	< .001
	Continuance commitment	.505**	< .001
	Normative commitment	.293**	.003
Principals' implementation of good governance	Teachers' commitment to organizational change	.626**	.000

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.6. Indicators of Principals' Leadership Predicting the Level of Teachers' Commitment to Organizational Change

Analysis shows that none of the predictors, including transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and instructional leadership, are found to be statistically significant in predicting teachers' commitment to organizational change [Table 6].

Table 6. Indicators of principals' leadership predicting the level of teachers' commitment to organizational change.

Predictors	Estimates	Significance
Transformational leadership	.058	.706
Distributed leadership	.116	.539
Instructional leadership	.213	.170

$R^2 = .214$; $F = 8.70$; $Sig. = .000$

3.7. Indicators of Principals' Implementation of Good Governance Predicting the Level of Teachers' Commitment to Organizational Change

Analysis indicates the impact of various indicators of principals' implementation of good governance on teachers' commitment to organizational change. Among the predictors, participatory decision-making emerges as the only statistically significant predictor, with a positive estimate of .687 ($p = .000$), indicating a significant positive relationship with teachers' commitment to organizational change [Table 7].

Table 7. Indicators of principals' implementation of good governance predicting the level of teachers' commitment to organizational change.

Predictors	Estimates	p-value
Transparency and accountability	-.173	.102
Participatory decision-making	.687	< .001
Responsive public service	.072	.512
Sustainable resource allocation	.028	.799

$R^2 = .425$; $F = 17.55$; $Sig. = .000$

4. DISCUSSION

The assessment of leadership styles within the context of the study revealed consistently high mean scores across transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership dimensions. This indicates that leadership within the schools is perceived as effective, empowering, and aligned with principles known to

foster positive change. This suggests that when school leaders demonstrate a blend of transformational vision, instructional focus, and shared leadership, they create conditions that can enhance innovation, teamwork, and the collective pursuit of school goals. These findings support Aslamiah et al. (2022), who argue that transformational leaders inspire, mentor, and influence their staff toward excellence. Likewise, Nawab and Asad (2020) emphasize that distributed leadership enhances teacher capacity and collaboration, fostering a culture of shared ownership.

In terms of good governance, results showed high ratings across all dimensions, with participatory decision-making emerging as the highest. This indicates that teachers perceive their principals as inclusive, transparent, and responsive leaders. When teachers are actively involved in decision-making processes, it not only builds trust but also motivates them to align their efforts with organizational goals. This creates a school climate conducive to sustained and meaningful change. Chagallima et al. (2021) highlight that governance systems characterized by participation and accountability improve institutional responsiveness and stakeholder engagement—key ingredients in successful change management.

The results on teachers' commitment to organizational change revealed high levels of affective and normative commitment, with continuance commitment slightly lower but still notable. This demonstrates that teachers in the study are emotionally invested in the school and feel a moral obligation to support its goals, rather than staying due to perceived costs of leaving. These forms of commitment are more enduring and intrinsically motivated, making them critical for long-term transformation. Samancioglu et al. (2020) found similar patterns, reinforcing the idea that teachers who strongly identify with their organization and its mission are more willing to go beyond basic responsibilities during change efforts.

The study also found a significant relationship between principal leadership styles and teachers' commitment to organizational change. This implies that effective leadership—particularly those styles that emphasize inspiration, collaboration, and instructional guidance—can nurture the psychological conditions needed for teachers to commit to and champion change. Uddin et al. (2020) confirm that leadership styles significantly influence how teachers respond to change initiatives, thereby reinforcing the need for leadership development in school systems.

A significant relationship was also found between the extent of good governance and teachers' commitment. Among the governance dimensions, participatory decision-making showed the strongest correlation with commitment. This underscores the strategic value of involving teachers in planning and policy decisions, which can foster a sense of agency and shared responsibility for change outcomes. Saleem et al. (2020) explain that good governance facilitates fairness and equitable practices, building the trust necessary for teacher engagement in reform efforts.

However, when analyzing the predictive power of leadership styles on teacher commitment, the study found no statistically significant influence. This suggests that while leadership styles are perceived positively and correlate with commitment, they may not directly cause it. Instead, teachers' intrinsic motivation, professional values, and internalized goals could play a more significant role. Tindowen (2019) supports this view, noting that teachers' high commitment levels often stem from personal investment in their profession rather than solely from external influences like principal behavior.

In contrast, participatory decision-making emerged as a significant predictor of teachers' commitment, while other governance factors did not show direct influence. This finding indicates that teachers' commitment is most influenced by their sense of voice and involvement in school affairs. While other governance practices like transparency and accountability are important, they may work indirectly or require further exploration to understand their impact fully. Brezicha et al. (2019) found that shared decision-making strengthens teacher commitment and fosters a sense of belonging and professional fulfillment.

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teachers perceive their principals to demonstrate predominantly transformational leadership, which reflects strong visionary and motivational qualities conducive to fostering school improvement and positive change. Among the dimensions of good governance, participatory decision-making emerged as the most evident, indicating that inclusive leadership practices are actively present and appreciated within the school environment. Teachers exhibited high levels of affective and normative commitment to organizational change, reflecting their strong emotional attachment and moral obligation to support the school's goals and reform efforts. Significant relationships were observed between both principal leadership and good governance with teachers' commitment to organizational change, confirming the essential roles of leadership and governance in shaping commitment. However, regression analysis revealed that only participatory decision-making significantly predicted teachers' commitment, suggesting that inclusive leadership strategies are more impactful than leadership style alone. This indicates that teachers' commitment is influenced not solely by external leadership behaviors, but also by how much they feel

involved in shaping the direction of the institution. Thus, internal motivation and a sense of agency may play crucial roles in sustaining their dedication to change initiatives.

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Research culture and ethics of faculty researchers at the university level

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ABSTRACT

A strong ethical foundation safeguards the rights and welfare of research participants, fosters public trust, and aligns research practices with both global standards and local values. This paper will address university faculty researchers' research culture and ethical practices. The paper will examine the shared challenges, incentives, and advantages of research at the individual, professional, and institutional levels. This paper facilitated purposive sampling to select the four participants who will undergo key informant interviews as the data collection process and used reflexive thematic analysis for data analysis. based on the extracted data, the global theme "research uplifts human potential that goes beyond the community" was created to summarize the study. the analysis is organized into three main themes, illustrating how research influences and extends beyond academic and community boundaries. The analysis indicates that research driven by institutional and personal motivations can significantly uplift human potential and extend its benefits beyond academic settings into the broader community. This multi-faceted approach to understanding research culture and ethics illustrates the complex interplay between individual aspirations, institutional frameworks, and societal contributions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The research culture and ethics in the Philippines have strong foundations in the country's social and cultural circumstances. The scientific community has been trying to strengthen and reinforce ethical standards in research to safeguard the rights and welfare of human participants while maintaining the scientific investigation's credibility. Ethical review boards, commonly established within academic institutions and research organizations, supervise research proposals to guarantee compliance with moral norms and safeguard the rights and welfare of participants (R. Sabio & C. Sabio, 2013). Ideally, research culture is characterized by a collaborative spirit, often involving community participation and engagement. This participatory approach enhances the relevance and impact of research findings and fosters trust and mutual respect between researchers and their study communities (Khodyakov et al., 2013)

Nevertheless, there are still educational issues to overcome, such as securing adequate money, allocating resources effectively, and maintaining unwavering adherence to ethical norms in various research environments (Lasco et al., 2021). The research issues confronting the Philippine education system extend beyond universities and colleges. These problems include education quality, budget, affordability, lack of facilities, increased drop-out rate, shortage of qualified teachers, and the focus of this research, the subject mismatch among the faculty members. The problem in the teachers-subjects mismatch is very evident, especially in the research subjects of the Senior High School, namely Practical Research 1 (Qualitative Research), Practical Research 2 (Quantitative Research), and Inquiries, Investigation, and Immersion. These are new subjects to the eyes of high school faculty members in the Philippines. Research subjects from pre-K to 12 are not considered a field or a subject matter, especially in high school (Caraig, 2023). However, the

Senior High School program brought a new perspective to the research subjects, aiming to develop Filipino learners' critical and research skills.

This paper will address the research culture and ethical practices of institutional researchers. The paper will examine the shared challenges, incentives, and advantages of research at the individual, professional, and institutional levels..

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Design

This research used phenomenology qualitative research design, and used the framework of Qitoras and Abuso (2021) which explores the best research practices of higher education institutions which was supported by Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta (2007) study, moreover this paper will also use the Braun and Clarke (2006) reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) and its six phases.

Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), as described by Braun and Clarke, is an approach to thematic analysis that emphasizes the active role of the researcher in identifying and interpreting themes within qualitative data. Unlike more structured methods, RTA is characterized by its flexibility and its embrace of researcher subjectivity as a valuable asset rather than a bias to be eliminated. In RTA, researchers are encouraged to engage deeply with their data, reflect on their influence on the analysis, and be transparent about their decisions and perspectives. The process involves familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for and reviewing themes, and refining and naming these themes to produce a coherent narrative. This approach is not bound to any specific theoretical framework, allowing it to be adapted to various research contexts and questions. Braun and Clarke highlight that RTA values the richness and complexity of qualitative data, advocating for a reflective and iterative process where themes are developed through a thoughtful and nuanced engagement with the data. This method underscores the importance of reflexivity, creativity, and the interpretative nature of qualitative research.

2.2. Qitoras and Abuso's Codes for Best Research Practices of HEI

The article of Qitoras and Abuso (2021) explores the effective strategies employed by Philippine higher education institutions to foster a strong research culture. It highlights various practices that contribute to developing and enhancing research capabilities among faculty and students. These practices include providing institutional support and infrastructure, such as adequate funding and facilities; offering capacity-building programs like training and mentorship; and implementing research incentives and recognition schemes to motivate researchers. The study also underscores the importance of fostering collaborative research and networking opportunities, both locally and internationally, and the role of effective policies and governance in creating a conducive research environment. Additionally, it emphasizes the significance of community engagement and conducting relevant, impactful research. The article concludes that a multifaceted approach, integrating strong support systems, capacity-building initiatives, incentives, collaborations, effective governance, and community engagement, is crucial for cultivating a dynamic and sustainable research culture in Philippine higher education institutions.

According to Qitoras and Abuso's (2021) paradigm, it is imperative to incorporate all-encompassing support systems that provide sufficient financing, infrastructure, and administrative support. To improve research skills, they stress the significance of capacity-building programs like training courses, seminars, and mentorship. The study also clarifies how much of a motivator rewards and recognition can be for researchers. Enhancing research production and quality also requires cultivating worldwide and local collaboration networks and partnerships.

This aligns with Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta's study, it identifies challenges such as limited funding and resources, heavy teaching loads, and a lack of institutional support and recognition for research activities (Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007). These challenges often hinder faculty members from participating in research and publishing their work. However, the study also identifies factors that can foster a vibrant research culture, including mentorship and collaboration opportunities, supportive leadership, and access to research grants and facilities. Additionally, the paper discusses the importance of creating an organizational climate that values and prioritizes research, as well as promoting a research-oriented mindset among faculty members.

2.3. Participants

To achieve the objectives of this study, I employed purposive sampling to select four (4) participants who served as interviewees. I ensured that each participant met the predetermined criteria prior to their inclusion in the research. The inclusion criteria required that participants be published researchers or writers, have taught courses related to research or writing, possess at least three years of research experience, and have produced research output in the field of qualitative research. On the other hand, individuals were

excluded if they were undergraduate students, had no publication record, or were published researchers without experience in teaching research. As part of the anonymity of all my four (4) participants, here are their pseudonyms.

- Kenny, male, 26, social science researcher
- Janny, female, 36, educational researcher
- Rhandy, male, 39, informational technology researcher
- Kristy, female, 27, educational researcher

Setting criteria for research participants is essential to ensure that we hit the target data of the study. Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria help researchers identify and select individuals best suited to answer the research questions and meet the study's objectives. This process enhances the quality and relevance of the data collected, as it ensures that participants possess the characteristics necessary to provide meaningful insights. Additionally, establishing criteria promotes fairness and transparency in participant selection, reducing potential biases that could affect the study's outcomes. It also safeguards the welfare of participants by excluding those who might be at risk of harm from participating. Well-defined criteria are fundamental to maintaining the scientific integrity of the research and ensuring ethical standards are upheld.

2.2. Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection tool used in this research is key informant interview. The chosen participants were politely asked to be part of this study by sending them an invitation letter including the purpose of the research and further details that are essential to know. When the participants agreed to be interviewed, I asked them about their preferred platforms (Zoom, MS Teams, Messenger, or Google Classroom). Following that process, I also informed them about the ethical considerations and discussed their rights as participants, as well as the expected duration of the interview.

2.3. Ethical Considerations

I emphasize confidentiality by assuring participants that the information they share will not be disclosed outside the research context and will solely be used for academic and research purposes. Moreover, the study guarantees anonymity, indicating that all identifying details—such as names and institutional affiliations—will be altered or removed to safeguard the privacy of participants. The data collection also underscores the principle of voluntary participation and the right to withdraw, stating that participants may discontinue their involvement at any time, with a commitment to either return or destroying their data. The participants are also asked on their preferred data collection platform for their convenience. The set of ethical considerations were explained prior to the conduct of the data collection.

2.4. Data Analysis

According to Braun and Clarke, Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) involves six key stages that guide researchers through a flexible and reflective process of identifying and interpreting themes within qualitative data [Table 1].

Table 1. 6 phases of reflexive thematic analysis (*Braun and Clarke, 2006*).

Phase	Procedure for each step
1. Familiarizing oneself with the data	Transcribing data; reading and re-reading; noting down initial codes.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the dataset, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Involved reviewing the themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire dataset; generate a thematic 'map'.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme; generation of clear names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	Final opportunity for analysis selecting appropriate extracts; discussion of the analysis; relate back to research questions to literature; produce report

The first stage, familiarization with the data, requires researchers to immerse themselves in it by reading and re-reading it, taking initial notes, and becoming deeply acquainted with the content. The second stage, generating initial codes, involves systematically coding interesting features across the entire data set and organizing these codes into meaningful groups. In the third stage, generating initial themes, researchers review the coded data to identify broader patterns and potential themes, collating all relevant data extracts under these themes. The fourth stage, reviewing themes, entails refining them by checking their coherence with the coded data and the entire data set, often leading to merging, splitting, or discarding themes. The fifth stage, defining and naming themes, involves a deeper analysis to clearly define each theme, articulate what it captures, and develop a detailed analysis of each theme, ensuring each tells a distinct part of the overall story. Finally, the sixth stage, producing the report, requires researchers to weave together the narrative and data extracts to construct a compelling and coherent account of the data, situating their analysis within the broader context of existing literature and research questions. This stage emphasizes the importance of producing a detailed and nuanced narrative that conveys the richness and complexity of the data.

3. RESULTS

Table 2 presents an overview of the codes and themes extracted from the data. The global theme “*research uplifts human potential that goes beyond the community*” was created to summarize the analysis. The analysis is organized into three main themes, illustrating how research influences and extends beyond academic and community boundaries [Table 2].

Table 2. Overview of codes and themes.

Global theme	“Research uplifts human potential that goes beyond the community”			
Organizing themes	research culture and ethics is influenced on the researchers’ eagerness of tenureship and personal satisfaction		authenticity on research motivation	research go beyond outside the institution
Basic themes	university tenureship	satisfaction and appreciation on personal growth	personalized research output	community extension
Codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • institution • accreditation • faculty ranking • consultancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self improvement • incentive • passion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intrinsic motivation • academic integrity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic contribution • obligation

3.1. Research Culture and Ethics are Influenced by the Researchers’ Eagerness of Tenureship and Personal Satisfaction

The first organizing theme, “*research culture and ethics is influenced by the researcher's eagerness for tenureship and personal satisfaction*,” emphasizes the impact of institutional frameworks and personal aspirations on research ethics and culture. It highlights how institutional accreditation, faculty ranking, and consultancy opportunities drive researchers to engage ethically and productively. The codes associated with this theme emphasize the structured, career-oriented motivations that underpin research activities. Moreover, it reflects on how self-improvement, incentives, and passion fuel a genuine commitment to research. This theme suggests that when researchers are passionate and satisfied with their growth, their output is more truthful and impactful.

Below is the significant data that enables me to draw the first organizing theme. I created the basic themes “*university tenureship*” and “*satisfaction and appreciation on personal growth*”.

“If you don’t have anything to contribute to the institution, how can you elevate your status in the institution? How can you improve teaching and learning? At least publish one research per year” -Janny, F, 36, Researcher

“It should be like a collaboration. It is tough to push people to do research individually, and you have to make sure the faculty work together and think of something like research where you can identify the new work-related problem.” -Kristy, F, 27, Researcher

“The university provides support by requiring regular progress reports and sharing information about conferences and journals. This structure ensures there is no excessive pressure and encourages continuous research updates.” -Kenny, M, 26, Researcher

“Institutionally, here at [institute name was omitted], one thing that I like is that one of the job descriptions of lecturer-researcher is that you must produce one research article monthly and

prepare for a research topic, like a small seminar meeting. They will choose a foreign lecturer to present a specific topic each month. It strengthens the culture of research. -Kenny, M, 26, Researcher

"They give like big incentives I received from the University Research Center. It's a big amount but it doesn't cover everything to travel. But it's enough for me to present my paper in in Thailand. So, okay na rin, di ba? So they are supporting me. I mean, the researchers, they have supported me in terms of the conference fee and some of the allowance assuring that I have to publish." -Janny, F, 36, Researcher

"It's interesting for me to listen to researchers because we have different fields. Somehow, we speak the same language, the language of research, curiosity, inquiry, and the hunger for knowledge. So, understanding what many people might think is fun in our institution." -Rhandy, M, 39, Researcher

"When I first joined [Institution name was omitted], I was surprised by their strong emphasis on research. Unlike my experience at a college in the Philippines, where research was not a part of our job description, here at [Institution name was omitted], it is ingrained in the culture. They have a dedicated research team focused on improving faculty research, and we have our own Scopus journal." -Kenny, M, 26, Researcher

"I also get paid to do research in Thailand. I earn from freelance work, proofreading and formatting" -Kenny, M, 26, Researcher

"I got my scholarship because of my research proposal to [Institution name was omitted], and my scholarship is a fully funded one, you know, for me to be a fully funded scholar because of my research." -Kenny, M, 26, Researcher

3.2. Authenticity on Research Motivation

The second organizing theme, *"authenticity on research motivation,"* delves into the intrinsic motivations and personal fulfillment derived from research. It also emphasizes intrinsic motivation and academic integrity as key drivers of research that is academically sound and personally meaningful to the researcher. Below is the significant data that enables me to draw the second organizing theme. I created the *"personalized research output"* as a basic theme.

"So meaning if you are teaching or if you are a faculty then you can identify [school-based problems] then why not write something about it. Kaya, if you cannot identify problems, It means that if you cannot write or cannot produce any research that can help in elevating your pedagogy, meaning parang wala kang ginawa diba? You're just teaching you don't have anything to contribute diba?" -Janny, F, 36, Researcher

"What you should do is review everything what are ethical and what are not because some of the faculty members are not aware. I am not sure if they are just making excuses, but why are you gonna publish a paper that is not yours [referring to the news about a teacher who published work which is not hers] I think it's still intentional." -Rhandy, M, 39, Researcher

"I was curious about how children learn unfamiliar words in their mother tongue, mainly terms we don't commonly use in daily conversation, such as those related to human anatomy. I conducted informal interviews with parents and teachers involved in teaching their mother tongue. This experience sparked my research interest, especially when I discovered the positive impact of using the mother tongue in education, particularly in building students' confidence." -Kenny, M, 26, Researcher

My research interest grew, and I completed a research project independently. My professor, who was already an experienced researcher, focused on dictionary research and even worked on translating research terminology into Filipino. I was thrilled to read her work, and this experience began my research journey." -Kenny, M, 26, Researcher

"Working independently has taught me how to be a good researcher. I needed to do everything myself - lots of reading and hard work. I aspired to be the best researcher in my class. My

goal was to graduate with the best thesis award. I was determined not to let anyone take that away from me. I believed that all the previous award winners had worked alone, so I had the mindset that I would do it all by myself.” -Kristy, F, 27, Researcher

3.3. Research Go Beyond the Institution

The third organizing theme, “*research extends beyond the institution*,” focuses on the broader impacts of research extending into the community. It further extends this idea by highlighting the role of academic contribution and a sense of obligation to the community, underscoring the societal impact of research endeavors. Below is the significant data that enables me to draw the third organizing theme. I draw the “community extension” as my basic theme for the third organizing theme.

“Started to become an assistant researcher; and then eventually, I became a researcher myself. I also assisted my then-boyfriend and now-husband in this research and research about inclusion and cultural preservation.” -Janny, F, 36, Researcher

“... you can do research out of what you think is like a good research topic. Good research title that would fit in the society.” -Kenny, M, 26, Researcher

“There should be like an ethics committee, di ba? Inside the institution, there is one I think there is in the institution where am working there is an executive committee, they are the ones who review whether the researcher has followed the ethical considerations also to make sure that when we extend our research outside our institution, we will not violate their culture...” -Kristy, F, 27, Researcher

The analysis indicates that research driven by institutional and personal motivations can significantly uplift human potential and extend its benefits beyond academic settings into the broader community. This multi-faceted approach to understanding research culture and ethics illustrates the complex interplay between individual aspirations, institutional frameworks, and societal contributions.

4. DISCUSSION

The first organizing theme, “*research culture and ethics are influenced by the researchers’ eagerness of tenureship and personal satisfaction*,” emphasize the importance of actively contributing to the institution through research endeavors. Elevating one’s status within the institution and improving teaching and learning can be achieved by consistently publishing research. This viewpoint underscores the notion that research output not only enhances individual credibility but also contributes to the overall academic environment. It advocates for a collaborative research approach, highlighting the challenges of pushing individuals to engage in research independently. It emphasizes the need for faculty members to work together to identify and address pertinent research problems. This collaborative ethos fosters an environment where collective efforts drive innovation and knowledge creation. Also, it provides insights into the institutional support structures that facilitate research productivity. He mentions the importance of regular progress reports and the dissemination of information about conferences and journals. These mechanisms not only alleviate excessive pressure but also promote continuous research updates, ensuring that faculty members remain engaged and informed.

The narratives offer valuable insights into the various forms of support and incentives researchers receive within their academic institutions, which leads to job satisfaction and appreciation of their personal growth.

It highlights the support the participants receive from their respective institutions, which provides substantial incentives. These accounts highlight the multifaceted support systems and incentives available to researchers within academic institutions. From financial assistance for conference participation to the cultivation of a collaborative research culture and the recognition of scholarly achievements through scholarships, these mechanisms play a crucial role in fostering a vibrant and thriving research community.

On the other hand, the second organizing theme, “*authenticity on research motivation*”, it explains that our motivation to engage in research work is personal and a reflection of the layers of our personality and personal motivation. Citing Peshkin (1988), subjectivity for as far as research is concerned is not a bias to be eliminated, but rather, a “virtuous” aspect that can enhance value when constructively utilized. This subjectivity encompasses the choice of research questions and data interpretation. Also, Harding (1991) has defended standpoint epistemologies on the ground that the researcher’s social location and interests largely determine the knowledge produced.

Researchers do not merely watch as the action unfolds, they are active participants and their interests construct the reality of their scholarly pursuits. As such, there is a tendency that scholarly work is conducted

when they wish to respond to urgent social problems, changed conditions in certain social arenas, or work in areas of personal interest (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, having stated all the above arguments, it is highly reasonable to claim that the personal character of research is not only inescapable, but fundamental to its trustworthiness and significance.

Research motivation is primarily intrinsic due to its alignment with fundamental aspects of human nature. At the core of intrinsic motivation for research lies human curiosity and a natural inclination to explore. This curiosity serves as a driving force behind research endeavors and compels individuals to pursue unanswered questions and delve into unexplored areas. Research offers intellectual fulfillment by providing a platform for individuals to challenge themselves, expand their knowledge base, and develop new skills. When researchers can explore topics that align with their interests and passions, their motivation becomes deeply rooted in intrinsic factors. The autonomy and self-direction inherent in research further amplify intrinsic motivation, as individuals have the freedom to shape their projects and methodologies according to their preferences. Also, when a researcher has an intrinsic motivation to write research, ethical considerations are handled with a certain level of consideration since the topic is close to the researchers' heart, therefore allowing their participants to be treated ethically. At its core, research ethics are guided by principles such as honesty, integrity, respect for human dignity, and the pursuit of knowledge for the betterment of society. These ethical principles are not imposed externally but are ingrained within individuals as intrinsic values that guide their conduct and decision-making throughout the research process. Researchers are driven by an intrinsic commitment to uphold these ethical standards, recognizing the importance of maintaining the integrity of the research process and ensuring the well-being and rights of research participants.

Moreover, the last organizing theme, *"research go beyond the institution,"* emphasizes that extending research to the community and its members' involvement in research fosters collaboration and partnership between researchers and the people who are directly impacted by the research outcomes. By engaging with community members, researchers can gain valuable insights, perspectives, and lived experiences that enrich the research process and ensure its relevance to the community's needs and priorities.

In relation to the study conducted by Qitoras and Abuso (2021), it can be inferred that the participants engaged in best research practices not solely for personal or professional advancement but also to contribute meaningfully to their respective communities. However, the analysis revealed a notable deficiency in both local and international research collaboration among the participants. In light of this finding, it is recommended that future researchers explore the underlying factors, including potential gaps and barriers, that may hinder Filipino scholars from actively participating in collaborative research efforts at both the national and global levels.

5. CONCLUSION

In a country marked by socio-economic diversity and regional disparities, research empowers individuals and institutions to generate context-specific knowledge and solutions that address local challenges while contributing to national and global progress.

As a faculty researcher myself, I picked this topic because I believe research has an extraordinary capacity to elevate human potential, transcending the boundaries of individual communities and contributing to the collective advancement of society. Pushing the frontiers of knowledge and research fosters innovation. It offers solutions to some of the most pressing challenges of our time, such as healthcare crises, environmental degradation, and technological stagnation. The impact of research is not limited to its immediate findings; it creates a ripple effect that enhances educational systems, informs public policies, and drives economic growth. As research extends beyond local and national confines, it encourages global collaboration, enabling the exchange of ideas and methodologies across cultures and disciplines. The exchange of knowledge leads to more comprehensive and inclusive solutions, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered when addressing global issues.

Moreover, research cultivates a culture of curiosity and critical thinking, inspiring individuals to engage in lifelong learning and continuous improvement. It empowers people to question the status quo, seek out new possibilities, and innovate in ways that can transform society. In this way, research does more than solve problems; it ignites a passion for discovery and progress that can uplift humanity as a whole. By transcending community boundaries and fostering a shared commitment to knowledge and innovation, research has the power to drive human potential to new heights, uniting us in the pursuit of a brighter, more equitable future for all.

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Attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccination among pregnant and lactating women in SAMARICA District, Occidental Mindoro: A health belief model perspective

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 vaccination is crucial for public health, yet hesitancy persists among specific populations, including pregnant and lactating women. This study aimed to determine the willingness of pregnant and lactating women in SAMARICA District, Occidental Mindoro, Philippines, to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and identify factors influencing their attitudes. This is an analytical cross-sectional study design using Health Belief Model survey interview. The total of 82 pregnant and lactating women from SAMARICA district in Occidental Mindoro were included through convenience sampling. Data were collected on demographics, perceived health status, vaccine information sources, and attitudes towards COVID-19 vaccination. Results shows that government trust ($r=.492$; p value=.000); perceived severity ($r=.384$; p value=.000); perceived benefits of COVID-19 vaccination ($r=.522$; p value=.000); perceived barriers of COVID-19 vaccination ($r=.364$; p value=.001) were positively correlated with the respondents' cues to action. Rural residence was also associated with higher vaccination intention. While overall vaccination intention was high, targeted interventions are necessary to address remaining hesitancy among this vulnerable population. Strengthening health communication campaigns and addressing specific concerns regarding vaccine safety during pregnancy and lactation are crucial for improving COVID-19 vaccine uptake.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pregnant and recently pregnant people are more likely to get severely ill from COVID-19 compared to non-pregnant people. Pregnant woman with COVID-19 is more likely to experience preterm birth and be more likely to have other poor pregnancy outcomes (Diesel et al., 2022; Zambrano et al., 2020).

Globally, weekly COVID-19 cases rose with just over 3.8 million new cases reported and deaths increased 64,000. The COVID-19 situation saw an increase in cases across all regions, with the Western Pacific region, including the Philippines, experiencing the largest surge. The Western Pacific region reported a cumulative total of 712,417 cases and 13,159 deaths (World Health Organization, 2021).

The Philippines received its first COVID-19 vaccines on March 1, 2021, marking the beginning of the national vaccination campaign (Ayson & Reyes, 2021). Vaccination is one of the most important inventions in the history of humanity, having saved millions of lives and continuing to be a crucial safeguard for global health and well-being (World Health Organization, 2019a). However, the end of the pandemic remains elusive, as vaccine confidence plummeted in the country following the widespread media coverage of the Dengvaxia controversy (Alfonso et al., 2021).

The Health Belief Model (HBM) has been widely used to study vaccine hesitancy among pregnant and lactating women. Studies have found that HBM constructs, particularly perceived benefits and self-efficacy, significantly predict COVID-19 vaccine acceptance behavior in this population (Moghimi et al., 2023). Vaccine hesitancy rates among pregnant women ranged from 26% to 57%, with fear of adverse events and lack of knowledge being primary drivers (Gianfredi et al., 2023). Perceived susceptibility, benefits, barriers, and severity were statistically significant indicators of both influenza and COVID-19 vaccine uptake (Kansal et al., 2022). Factors such as young age, high educational level, and primigravidae status were associated with higher vaccine acceptance (Moghimi et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, despite the proven efficacy and availability of services, there remains a proportion of the population who refuse or delay vaccination (McKee & Bohannon, 2016). The reluctance or refusal to vaccinate, poses a significant threat to global health, potentially reversing progress made in combating vaccine-preventable diseases. This phenomenon, recognized by the World Health Organization in 2019 as one of the top ten threats to global health, stems from various factors, including complacency, inconvenience, and lack of confidence (World Health Organization, 2019b). Despite the demonstrated effectiveness of vaccination to reduce the morbidity and mortality of infectious diseases, immunization rates have been declining in many areas of the world (Amin et al., 2017). This has resulted to a high incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases (Lu et al., 2015). Vaccine refusal and delay have been associated with outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases (Phadke et al., 2016). As COVID-19 continues to spread around the world, more and more people are being motivated to take precautions to prevent its transmission, by staying home, observing physical distancing, and, most importantly, getting vaccinated. The last has been met with mixed reactions – many people are hesitant and skeptic to take the shot. It is documented that the success in a widespread vaccination is being challenged by individuals and groups who choose to delay or refuse vaccines (Paterson et al., 2016). The major reason for this behavior are the doubts about the safety of the vaccines, as influenced by bad experiences or by media (Dubé et al., 2014).

Despite limited studies on COVID vaccination among pregnant and lactating women, recommendations have been made for these special groups. Breastfeeding women who are part of a recommended vaccination group (e.g., healthcare workers) can receive the vaccine. Importantly, breastfeeding should not be interrupted before or after vaccination (Department of Health, 2021b). For pregnant women, vaccination can be considered, particularly after the first trimester, if recommended for their specific group. Generally, vaccines containing inactivated viruses are safe during pregnancy, while those with live viruses are typically not recommended (Marnach, 2017). Despite these recommendations, vaccine hesitancy among pregnant women persists. Factors contributing to this hesitancy include underestimating the risks of COVID-19 infection during pregnancy, concerns about potential harm to the unborn child, apprehension about existing health conditions, and fear of injection pain (Nalubega et al., 2021). There is a low to moderate COVID-19 vaccine acceptance among pregnant and lactating women (Goncu Ayhan et al., 2021).

Changes in the level of acceptance among pregnant and lactating women during a pandemic may be related to both individual and social or organizational factors. Increased perceived risk of infection, benefits of vaccines, government restrictions, penalties for not using masks, as well as intense communication of the threat from traditional and social media can have a significant impact on willingness to vaccinate (Al-Jayyousi et al., 2021; Kuciel et al., 2022). Similarly, Vaccine hesitancy among pregnant and lactating women is indeed prevalent, with studies reporting hesitancy rates ranging from 26% to 56% (Gianfredi et al., 2023). This study aimed to investigate the attitudes of pregnant and lactating women towards vaccination for COVID-19.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Study Design

Analytical cross-sectional study design using a structured questionnaire. The study was conducted in SAMARICA district, composed of four municipalities (San Jose, Magsaysay, Rizal and Calintaan) in Occidental Mindoro from January 2021 to March 2021.

2.2. Population and Sample

The study population consisted of 82 pregnant and lactating women who accessed healthcare services in SAMARICA District, Occidental Mindoro. This sample size was determined by the accessible population within the district.

2.3. Research Instrument

The survey consisted of questions that assessed 1) demographic background, and self-perceived health status; and 2) perception of COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccination.

Personal details, including age, marital status, and average monthly household income. Participants were also asked if they had any existing chronic diseases and to rate their overall health status. COVID-19 experience was assessed by inquiring whether participants had any family members, or any friends, neighbors, or colleagues with confirmed COVID-19.

Health Belief Model derived items were used to measure the participants' perception of COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccination. The questions were probing perceived susceptibility to COVID-19 (three items), perceived severity of COVID-19 (three items), perceived benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine (two items), perceived barriers to getting a vaccination against COVID-19 (five items) and cues to action (two items). All the response options were 'strongly agree', agree, 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' (Glanz et al., 2008).

2.4. Data Collection

The data collection technique was a survey interview using a questionnaire. Data was collected during scheduled prenatal and expanded program for immunization (EPI) clinic visits in the barangay health center. Informed consent was attained from the mothers before the researchers conducted the interview. Minimum health standards were observed in the health facility, such as social distancing, wearing masks and face shields, and hand hygiene.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data collected were encoded in Microsoft Excel and were analyzed with SPSS version 20 for descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics used included percentages and frequencies for demographic profile and mean for vaccine hesitancy, personality traits and intention to vaccinate. Pearson's correlation coefficient was utilized to test the relationships between the samples' vaccine hesitancy to correlate with cues to action on vaccination of the respondents. Fisher's t-test was utilized to determine the significance of correlations. A p-value of equal to or less than .05 was considered statistically significant.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

The pregnant and lactating women were informed of the purpose of the study and the methods used and signed an informed consent statement. Participation was voluntary and could be terminated at any time during the conduct of the study. The participants were asked to answer all the questions honestly and were reassured about the anonymity and confidentiality of the information. The participants were informed that they could be provided with the results of the study once they expressed interest in knowing the results after the analysis and completion of the final draft. The conduct of the survey complied with the policy stated in Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Complete anonymity of the research participants was observed. Access to the data collected was limited only to the researchers. Unless required by law, the names of the participants would not be disclosed outside the research clinic. Names were available only to the following people or agencies: the principal investigator and staff; authorized representatives of the principal investigator; ethics committees; and health authorities.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Demographic Profile

A total of 82 complete responses were received. Table 1 shows the demographics of the study participants. Remarkably, the study participants had a higher representation of participants aged 18 to 29 years old (59.76%). A great majority of the respondents were in a relationship/married and cohabiting (81.71%) while their educational attainment is college graduate (37.8%). Most of the respondents belong to the poor income class (10.98%) with most of them having only 1 child (31.71%). Comparing health insurance, a higher proportion of participants have Philhealth (68.29) than those who do not have health insurance (31.71). A higher proportion of participants from rural (62.2%) than urban (37.8%) residences responded to the survey [Table 1].

Table 1. Demographic profile of pregnant and lactating women.

Demographic Profile	Intention			Total n(%)
	Has Intent n(%)	Neutral n(%)	No Intent n(%)	
Age				
18-29	21 (25.61)	19 (23.17)	9 (10.98)	49 (59.76)
30-39	14 (17.07)	4 (4.88)	4 (4.88)	22 (26.83)
40-49	7 (8.54)	3 (3.66)	1 (1.22)	11 (13.41)
Relationship status				
Single, never married	1 (1.22)	6 (7.32)	1 (1.22)	12 (14.63)
In a relationship/ married but living apart or separated	1 (1.22)	1 (1.22)	1 (1.22)	3 (3.66)
In a relationship/married or cohabiting	12 (14.63)	19 (23.17)	12 (14.63)	67 (81.71)
Educational attainment				
Highschool undergraduate	0	1 (1.22)	0	1 (1.22)
Highschool graduate	10 (12.2)	9 (10.98)	4 (4.88)	23 (28.05)
Vocational	7 (8.54)	10 (12.2)	4 (4.88)	21 (25.61)
College undergraduate	3 (3.66)	1 (1.22)	1 (1.22)	5 (6.1)
College graduate	21 (25.61)	5 (6.1)	5 (6.1)	31 (37.8)
Masteral/ Doctoral	1 (1.22)	0	0	1 (1.22)
Income class				
Poor	21 (25.61)	19 (23.17)	21 (25.61)	9 (10.98)
Low income (but not poor)	9 (10.98)	4 (4.88)	9 (10.98)	3 (3.66)
Lower middle income	6 (7.32)	1 (1.22)	6 (7.32)	0
Middle middle income	2 (2.44)	0	2 (2.44)	1 (1.22)
Upper middle	2 (2.44)	0	2 (2.44)	0
Upper income (but not rich)	0	0	0	0
Rich	2 (2.44)	2 (2.44)	2 (2.44)	1 (1.22)
Health Insurance				
None	11 (13.41)	11 (13.41)	4 (4.88)	26 (31.71)
Philhealth	31 (37.8)	15 (18.29)	10 (12.2)	56 (68.29)
Number of child				
0	5 (6.1)	3 (3.66)	1 (1.22)	9 (10.98)
1	14 (17.07)	7 (8.54)	5 (6.1)	26 (31.71)
2	13 (15.85)	9 (10.98)	3 (3.66)	25 (30.49)
3	5 (6.1)	3 (3.66)	2 (2.44)	10 (12.2)
4	5 (6.1)	4 (4.88)	3 (3.66)	12 (14.63)
Residence				
Urban	2 (2.44)	10 (12.2)	2 (2.44)	31 (37.8)
Rural	12 (14.63)	16 (19.51)	12 (14.63)	51 (62.2)

3.2. Sources of COVID-19 Vaccine Information

Most of the participants responded that the health agencies (48.78%) are the source of information for COVID-19 pandemic and vaccination of the respondents [Table 2].

Table 2. Sources of COVID-19 vaccine information.

Source of information	Intention			Total n(%)
	Has Intent n(%)	Neutral n(%)	No Intent n(%)	
Social media	19 (23.17)	11 (13.41)	5 (6.1)	35 (42.68)
Mass media	20 (24.39)	13 (15.58)	5 (6.1)	38 (46.34)
Government	12 (14.63)	4 (4.88)	3 (3.66)	18 (21.95)
Health agencies	26 (31.71)	9 (10.98)	26 (31.71)	40 (48.78)
Scientists	1 (1.22)	0	0	1 (1.22)
Pharmaceutical companies	2 (2.44)	0	1 (1.22)	3 (3.66)
Healthcare providers	20 (24.39)	10 (12.2)	6 (7.32)	35 (42.68)
My personal social networks	10 (12.2)	8 (9.76)	5 (6.1)	23 (28.05)

Accepted multiple response.

3.3. Perceived Health Status

Most of the participants are in their 3rd trimester of pregnancy (31.71%) while there are breastfeeding mothers of more than 6 months (17.07%). There are few pregnant and lactating women with comorbidity (23.17%) compared to non-comorbid (76.83%). The participants perceived their overall health status as neutral (48.78%) [Table 3].

Table 3. Perceived health status.

Perceived health status	Intention for Vaccination			Total n(%)
	Has Intent n(%)	Neutral n(%)	No Intent n(%)	
Pregnancy				
Not pregnant	14 (17.07)	4 (4.88)	8 (9.76)	26 (31.71)
1st trimester	9 (10.98)	4 (4.88)	3 (3.66)	16 (19.51)
2nd trimester	5 (6.1)	8 (9.76)	1 (1.22)	14 (17.07)
3rd trimester	14 (17.07)	10 (12.2)	2 (2.44)	26 (31.71)
Breastfeeding				
Not breastfeeding	28 (34.15)	22 (26.83)	6 (7.32)	56 (68.29)
6 weeks below	4 (4.88)	1 (1.22)	0	5 (6.1)
6 weeks to 6 months	6 (7.32)	0	1 (1.22)	7 (8.54)
more than 6 months	4 (4.88)	3 (3.66)	7 (8.54)	14 (17.07)
Do you have any medical condition diagnosed by a medical doctor?				
No	34 (41.46)	18 (21.95)	11 (13.41)	63 (76.83)
Yes	8 (9.76)	8 (9.76)	3 (3.66)	19 (23.17)
How do you rate your overall health				
Very Poor	1 (1.22)	0	0	1 (1.22)
Neutral	16 (19.51)	13 (15.85)	11 (13.41)	40 (48.78)
Good	12 (14.63)	5 (6.10)	1 (1.22)	18 (21.95)
Very Good	13 (15.85)	8 (9.76)	2 (2.44)	23 (28.05)

3.4. Attitude towards COVID-19 Vaccine

The participants had neutral perceptions of susceptibility. The majority agreed and were worried about the likelihood of getting COVID-19 (3.44 ± 1.316). The participants had high perceptions of the severity of COVID-19 on its serious complications (4.04 ± 1.138). High perceptions of the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination were reported and believed that vaccination is a good idea which perceived fewer worries about catching COVID-19 (4.04 ± 1.059). The perceived barriers construct concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine being faulty/fake (4.05 ± 1.088). Many of the participants reported that they would only receive the COVID-19 vaccine if given adequate information (3.09 ± 1.165). Most of the respondent's attitude towards COVID-19 and the COVID-19 vaccine was neutral to high perceptions [Table 4].

Table 4. Attitude towards COVID-19 vaccine.

Attitudes	Mean	Standard Deviation
Perceived susceptibility of contracting COVID-19		
My chance of getting COVID-19 in the next few months is great.	2.93	1.39
I am worried about the likelihood of getting COVID.	3.44	1.32
Getting COVID-19 is currently a possibility for me.	3.01	1.44
Factor mean	3.12	1.19
Perceived Severity		
Complications from COVID-19 are serious.	4.04	1.14
I will be very sick if I get COVID-19.	3.61	1.22
I am afraid of getting COVID-19.	4.02	1.11
Factor mean	3.89	0.92
Perceived benefits of COVID-19 vaccination		
Vaccination is a good idea because I feel less worried about catching COVID-19.	4.04	1.06
Vaccination decreases my chance of getting COVID-19 or its complications.	3.71	1.16
Factor mean	3.87	0.96
Perceived barriers of COVID-19 vaccination		
Worry the possible side-effects of COVID-19 vaccination would interfere with my usual activities.	3.76	1.01
I am concern about the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccination.	3.55	1.11
I am concern about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccination.	3.51	1.19
I am concern of my affordability (high cost of the vaccine) of getting the COVID-19 vaccination.	3.15	1.31
I am concern of the faulty/fake COVID-19 vaccine.	4.05	1.09
Factor mean	3.60	0.84
Cues to action		
I will only take the COVID-19 vaccine if I was given adequate information about it.	3.98	1.17
I will only take the COVID-19 vaccine if the vaccine is taken by many in the public.	3.57	1.16
If my employer recommends vaccine, i will take it.	3.59	1.19
Factor mean	3.71	1.02

Scale: 1.00-1.79 Strongly disagree; 1.80-2.59 Disagree; 2.60-3.39 Neutral; 3.40-4.19 Agree 4.20-5.00 Strongly agree.

3.5. The Relationship between Vaccine Hesitancy and the Cues to Action.

This shows that government trust ($r=.492$; $p\text{-value} <.001$); perceived severity ($r=.384$; $p\text{-value} <.001$); perceived benefits of COVID-19 vaccination ($r=.522$; $p\text{-value} <.001$); perceived barriers of COVID-19 vaccination ($r=.364$; $p\text{ value}=.001$) is positively correlated with the respondents' cues to action [Table 5].

Table 5. The relationship between vaccine hesitancy and the cues to action.

Health Belief	Cues to Action	
	R	p-value
Perceived health status	.206	.063
Government trust	.492	<.001**
Perceived susceptibility of contracting COVID-19	.170	.126
Perceived severity	.384	<.001**
Perceived benefits of COVID-19 vaccination	.522	<.001**
Perceived barriers of COVID-19 vaccination	.364	.001**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

4. DISCUSSION

In the age group of 18-29, most of them have an intent to get the vaccine (25.61%). Participant responses to whether they would take a COVID-19 vaccine were mixed. Some would get the vaccine right away, while other participants said they would not take a COVID-19 vaccine feeling that COVID-19 would not affect their health or the health of their family members (Lang et al., 2021). But according to Piltch-Loeb et al., (2022) younger ages are more likely hesitant to get the vaccine compared to older ages because most of the vaccinated persons were older groups.

Married/cohabiting respondents with children were more likely to indicate that the vaccine was effective, compared to those without children or not in a relationship (Konopińska et al., 2021; Thorneloe et al., 2020). Adults with lower educational attainment, with lower income, and without health insurance were of most likely to report lack of intent to receive the COVID-19 vaccine (Nguyen et al., 2021). Another study supported the results, states that as years of education increases, so does reported acceptance of the COVID-19 vaccine. Unemployed participants reported a lower acceptance rate of a COVID-19 vaccine. It demonstrates that low-income communities, which are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, may be more susceptible to continued outbreaks, even if a vaccine is available (Malik et al., 2020). Additionally, age less than 24 years, living in urban areas, tertiary education, students, single marital status, and family income were significantly associated with vaccine acceptance of COVID19 vaccination respondents (Marzo et al., 2022). On the residence of the participants, COVID-19 vaccination coverage was lower overall, among men and women in rural compared with urban counties COVID-19 (Murthy et al., 2021). But according to the Department of Health, given the limited global supply of vaccines for COVID-19, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) has adopted the prioritization framework and criteria for prioritizing population most-at risk regardless of other factors (Department of Health, 2021a).

On the contrary from the result of the study, Alzoubi et al., (2020) that social media was the most common source of information. Similarly, Olaimat et al., (2020), stated that the most common source of the information about COVID-19 was the internet and social media followed by mass media. But the respondents chosen health agencies and health workers as their source of information which relates to the guidelines of the World Health Organization (2020), states that health workers should provide or reinforce accurate infection prevention and control and public health information, including too concerned people who have neither symptoms nor risk.

Contrarily, participants in their first trimester expressed greater interest in receiving the COVID-19 vaccination compared with participants in their second and third trimesters (Goncu Ayhan et al., 2021). The participant's action would be from the advice from the Department of Health, (2021b) which states that a pregnant woman should consider to get vaccinated after the first trimester of pregnancy. Generally, breastfeeding mothers has an intent to get the vaccine but Mayo & Monfort (2021), demanded the right of the breastfeeding mothers the updated information and the right to choose whether to be vaccinated or not until there is evidence from clinical trials. Kong et al., (2020), pregnant women were more likely to receive the vaccine because their healthcare providers had recommended it. Reno et al., (2021), found that persons who had no comorbidities had the highest level of hesitancy. On the other note, almost one in five respondents with comorbid conditions reported COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy (Tsai et al., 2021). Vaccine hesitancy is present in almost 60% of persons with comorbidity, and the most common reasons are the fear of the vaccine impacting the cancer therapy, fear of side-effects, and lack of information (Noronha et al., 2021). Despite most of the participants perceived their health status as neutral, they positively respond that they have an

intention to get the vaccine. Accepting a vaccine is not an easy task when people are barraged by conflicting messages about its potential safety and effectiveness and people can move up and down the continuum due to a variety of influences (Tibbetts, 2020).

The participants perceived susceptibility, severity, benefits barriers and cues to action may influence COVID-19 vaccine acceptance. HBM was used widely as the theoretical framework to explain how the acceptance of changes in health-related behaviors of individuals is mainly due to their perceptions (Huynh et al., 2021). Similar with the results, the majority view was that there was a great chance of getting COVID-19 in the next few months (L. P. Wong et al., 2020). But Lin et al., (2020) found that the participants had low perceptions of susceptibility. The majority disagreed that there was a great chance of getting COVID-19 in the next few months were also not worried about the likelihood of getting COVID-19 and disagreed that it was currently possible that they would get COVID-19. According to Iorfa et al., (2020), knowledge had a significant influence on precautionary behavior. It is logical to expect that when individuals are aware of threats, they will adopt reasonable behaviors that may avert the threat from causing harm.

The majority also had high perceptions of severity of the COVID-19 infection. High perceptions of benefits and perceived barriers were also reported. Under the perceived barriers construct, concern about affordability and the COVID-19 vaccine being halal (kosher) was. Although nearly all the participants reported that they will only take the COVID-19 vaccine if given adequate information (L. P. Wong et al., 2020).

Governments, public health officials and advocacy groups must be prepared to address hesitancy and build vaccine literacy so that the public will accept immunization when appropriate. Anti-vaccination activists are already campaigning in multiple countries against the need for a vaccine, with some denying the existence of COVID-19 altogether (Enserink, 2020). Respondents who said that they trusted their government were more likely to accept a vaccine than those who said that they did not. Moreover, if an individual trusted their government, they were more likely to respond positively to their employer's vaccine recommendation than someone who did not (Lazarus et al., 2020). Higher trust in government regarding COVID-19 control was significantly associated with higher adoption of health behaviors. This is in line with several previous studies where higher levels of trust in government are related to more support for public welfare policies and adherence to public health interventions (Hetherington & Husser, 2012). Investigating the connection among threat perceptions and willingness to take a potential vaccine towards COVID-19, discovered that respondents who rated the disorder better on a threat belief index (such as numerous threat measures) extra frequently pronounced that they might receive a vaccine towards COVID-19 (Malik et al., 2020). A key determinant in people's vaccination choices is the danger they associate with the disease the vaccine protects against (Thomson et al., 2016). COVID-19 risk perception, and perceived vaccine benefits, and barriers (Al-Ashwal et al., 2020) were significant predictors of intention (Al-Mistarehi et al., 2021). Most members are planning to get the COVID-19 immunization. Critical indicators of a positive purpose to require the COVID-19 immunization incorporate high-perceived benefits and lower seen barriers to accepting the immunization, and higher seen susceptibility to contamination. Interventions targeting HBM concepts could be effective in increasing the uptake of the vaccine (M. C. S. Wong et al., 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

This study explored the attitudes of pregnant and lactating women in SAMARICA district, Occidental Mindoro towards COVID-19 vaccination. The majority of respondents expressed a positive attitude towards vaccination, which was reflected in their high perceived benefits of vaccination and moderate perceived severity of COVID-19. While a higher proportion of participants resided in rural areas, further research is needed to determine if this translates to a higher likelihood of vaccination uptake. This study did not find a statistically significant relationship between demographic factors such as age, relationship status, education, income, number of children, and intention to vaccinate. However, it showed that women living in the rural area are more likely to get the vaccine. Perceived severity, perceived benefits, and lower perceived barriers, along with strong cues to action, emerged as significant predictors of a positive attitude toward vaccination. While this study did not specifically investigate differences in vaccine attitudes across trimesters or breastfeeding status, further research is recommended to explore this area. Finally, the study confirmed the importance of trust in government and health authorities as a factor influencing cues to action.

Public health campaigns should emphasize the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant and lactating women, addressing common concerns about safety and efficacy. These campaigns should leverage trusted sources of information, such as health workers and local health agencies, given their prominence as information sources among the study participants. Interventions should focus on reducing perceived barriers to vaccination. Efforts to enhance trust in government and health authorities are essential for promoting

vaccine acceptance. Qualitative research could be valuable in exploring the reasons behind vaccine hesitancy and understanding the specific concerns of pregnant and lactating women.

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Batak parents' challenges and aspirations in indigenous education: Insights for policies and practices

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resource deficiency

ABSTRACT

This study examines the educational challenges and aspirations of Batak parents in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Philippines. Guided by two central questions — “What challenges do you face in school education?” and “How would you like to see your children ten years from now?”— the research adopts a qualitative phenomenological approach to capture the lived experiences of 24 parents of Grade 5 and 6 learners from selected elementary schools serving the Batak community. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the local language to promote authenticity and comfort in sharing. Thematic analysis, based on Braun and Clarke’s framework, revealed three key themes for educational challenges: economic barriers, resource deficiency, and curriculum-related challenges, which encompass financial instability, lack of educational resources, and struggles with standardized assessments and language barriers. For aspirations, three major themes emerged: educational achievement, economic stability and empowerment, and community leadership and contribution. Parents expressed hopes for their children to complete their education, secure stable employment, and contribute meaningfully to their community as leaders and role models. This study stresses the need for culturally responsive educational policies, improved resource allocation, and systemic interventions that address the unique challenges of indigenous communities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is home to over 110 distinct indigenous peoples (IPs), collectively numbering between 14 to 17 million individuals, each with its unique languages and cultural practices. Among these groups, the Igorot, Lumad, and Aeta have demonstrated remarkable resilience in preserving their cultural traditions despite centuries of colonization. Their rich heritage encompasses various forms of artistic expression, including weaving and carving, as well as the preservation of their languages. Geographically, these Indigenous communities are primarily located in Northern Luzon, Central Philippines, and Mindanao. The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 plays an important role in safeguarding their rights, particularly concerning ancestral domains, which promotes the continuation of their cultural heritage amidst ongoing challenges (Simporios, 2024).

In the Philippines' island of Palawan, which is home to approximately 57 ethnolinguistic groups, including the Tagbanua, Palaw'an, and Batak, the demography reflects both diversity and vulnerability. While the populations of other Indigenous groups and migrant communities in Palawan have increased, the Batak population has remained relatively stable. In 1995, the Batak constituted 0.55% of Palawan's total Indigenous population, but by 2020, this figure had dwindled to an estimated 300 individuals, comprising approximately 49 family groups (Tajolosa, 2022). This demographic shift points to the urgent need to address the educational challenges faced by the Batak, particularly in Puerto Princesa City, where their unique circumstances call for focused research.

Despite the provision of free primary education, Batak families encounter significant barriers to accessing quality education. Poverty remains a pervasive challenge, with the Philippine Statistics Authority indicating that the poverty line in Palawan was P6,786 in 2018. Many Batak parents prioritize immediate economic needs over educational aspirations, often requiring their children to skip school to assist with income-generating activities (Catyong et al., 2023). This cycle of poverty not only hampers educational attainment but also perpetuates a lack of basic literacy skills among Batak individuals, as noted by Ancheta (2024), who reported that many lack fundamental reading, writing, and math skills.

Furthermore, the challenges faced by indigenous peoples education (IPEd) teachers in enhancing learners' skills, such as digital literacy and reading comprehension, worsen the educational disparities experienced by Batak learners (Killip, 2024). The struggles of IPEd teachers, compounded by gaps in language learning standards and instructional support, hinder the educational progress of Batak children. This situation is particularly concerning given that a significant proportion of the Batak population is young, with 35% aged 0-10 and 18% aged 11-20, yet many adults remain undereducated, often only

The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 represents a significant legislative milestone aimed at recognizing and protecting the rights of IPs in the Philippines. This law mandates the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in educational curricula and promotes the establishment of culturally appropriate educational programs (Reyes et al., 2017; Romero, 2024). The indigenous peoples education (IPEd) program, initiated by the Philippines's Department of Education, seeks to institutionalize these principles by integrating Indigenous perspectives into the national education framework (Tejano, 2022; Grande, 2023). The IPEd program aims to provide a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for IPs, addressing historical injustices and promoting cultural preservation (Jorolan-Quintero, 2013; Jocson, 2018).

Despite these advancements, various challenges hinder the effective implementation of educational policies for IPs. Access to quality education remains a significant issue, particularly in remote and marginalized communities. Many IPs face geographical barriers, lack of resources, and inadequate infrastructure, which limit their educational opportunities (Manaysay, 2020; Supan, 2023). Additionally, socio-economic factors, such as poverty and discrimination, further exacerbate these challenges, which led to high dropout rates among Indigenous students (Mi-ing, 2019; Cabanilla, 2013). The Batak community, for example, has faced unique challenges in accessing education due to their geographical isolation and socio-economic conditions. Studies indicate that the Batak have lower literacy rates compared to other Indigenous groups, reflecting systemic barriers to education (Simpórios, 2024; Hung et al., 2022). Furthermore, cultural biases and discrimination within the educational system often discourage Batak students from pursuing formal education, which led to a cycle of marginalization (Quijano, 2021; Abuso, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated the educational landscape for IPs in the Philippines. The shift to remote learning has disproportionately affected Indigenous communities, many of whom lack access to technology and reliable internet connectivity (Clariza, 2019; Espada, 2023). This situation has stressed the need for inclusive educational policies that consider the unique circumstances of IPs, to ensure that their rights to education are upheld even in times of crisis (Dondorp, 2021; Cahapay, 2020).

The state of indigenous peoples' education in the Philippines is a reflection of historical injustices, cultural dynamics, and ongoing challenges. While policies like the IPRA and IPEd initiatives have made strides toward inclusivity, significant barriers remain. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from government agencies, education institutions, and Indigenous communities to create a more equitable and culturally responsive educational environment. Thus, in response, the present study aimed to (1) investigate the various challenges that Batak parents encounter regarding their children's education, (2) to explore Batak parents' aspirations for their children's educational achievements, including their hopes for completing schooling and pursuing higher education, and (3) to provide insights that can inform educational policies and practices aimed at supporting indigenous communities, particularly in addressing the unique challenges and aspirations of Batak families. Addressing these gaps and challenges comprehensively is crucial for promoting equitable and inclusive education for Batak learners and other Indigenous Peoples in similar situations (Bayang, 2024).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Design

This study employed a qualitative research methodology grounded in phenomenology to explore the experiences and aspirations of Batak parents regarding their children's education. Phenomenology is particularly suited for this research as it seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals and the meanings they ascribe to those experiences (Mardiyah & Pamungkas, 2021). By focusing on the perspectives of Batak parents, the study aimed to capture the essence of their challenges in education and their hopes for their children's future.

2.2. Participants and Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in selected schools in Puerto Princesa City under the City Schools Division, Department of Education, focused on parents of Grade 5 and 6 learners of identified elementary schools that cater to Batak learners. These schools are Manggapin Elementary School, Concepcion Elementary School-Tagnaya Annex, Tanabag Elementary School, Maoyon Elementary School, and Cayasan Elementary School.

In the mountains, Manggapin Elementary School, Concepcion Elementary School-Tagnaya Annex, and Cayasan Elementary School stand tall, serving as beacons of knowledge and hope to the Batak learners inclusively. However, reaching these schools is no easy task. One must trek through rugged terrain, crossing rivers multiple times. Due to the ethical considerations, voluntary sampling was employed. Fortunately, all 24 parents of the Grade 5 and 6 voluntarily participated in this study. According to Hennink and Kaiser (2022), data saturation can be achieved by at least 9 participants through interview; thus, this justified the total number of our participants.

2.3. Data Gathering Procedure

A formal letter requesting permission to conduct the study was submitted to the office of the school head or principal and duly endorsed to the District Supervisor for approval. Upon obtaining the necessary authorization, the researcher coordinated with the identified schools and set schedules for data collection in consultation with the participants to ensure minimal disruption to their duties.

Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews, which allowed for flexibility in exploring relevant themes while maintaining a consistent framework across all participants. This approach facilitated in-depth and meaningful conversations, enabling the researcher to gain deeper insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives. Interviews were conducted in person and in the participants' preferred language – Filipino to ensure clarity, comfort, and authenticity in responses. Each session was held in a quiet, private setting to foster openness and confidentiality. Prior to each interview, informed consent was obtained, and participants were assured of the anonymity and voluntary nature of their participation.

The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the depth of discussion. With participants' consent, the sessions were audio-recorded to aid in accurate transcription and analysis. Field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual observations. All data collected were securely stored and treated with strict confidentiality to protect the identities and responses of the participants.

2.2. Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the rights and welfare of participants. Participation is entirely voluntary, with individuals free to decline or withdraw at any point without penalty. Informed consent is obtained through a clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and participants' rights. The research complies with the Philippine Data Privacy Act (RA 10173), which requires all personal information and responses be confidential, securely stored, and used solely for the study.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study utilized thematic analysis, a qualitative method for identifying and interpreting patterns within qualitative data. The analysis focused on the central questions: "What are the challenges you faced in school education?" and "How would you like to see them ten years from now?". The interview responses were recorded, transcribed and translated into English text. Thematic analysis was selected for its flexibility and ability to provide detailed understandings of Batak parents' experiences and aspirations regarding their children's education (Peterson, 2017; Belotto, 2018).

The analysis followed the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) [Table 1]: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Chapman et al., 2015). Initially, researchers immersed themselves in the data by reading the interview transcripts multiple times to understand participants' perspectives. In the second phase, initial codes were generated (Mackieson et al., 2018).

Researchers then grouped codes into broader categories which helped us identify the themes. Each theme was reviewed to confirm its representation of the data and distinctiveness from others (Nugroho, 2024). The next phase involved defining and naming themes, articulating their essence and significance in relation to the research questions (Qaissi, 2024). Finally, the report was produced, integrating themes with direct quotes from participants, providing a comprehensive view of their challenges and aspirations.

Table 1. Data analysis framework (*Braun & Clarke, 2006*).

Step	Description	Example from Data
1. Familiarization with data	Data was transcribed, read multiple times, and initial observations were noted to gain a deep understanding of the responses.	Observations: Parents consistently mentioned financial struggles and aspirations for educational success.
2. Generating initial codes	Meaningful segments of the data were labeled with codes that summarized key ideas or patterns.	Codes: <i>insufficient income</i> (P3, P5); <i>children missing school to work</i> (P6, P7, P9); <i>Desire for scholarships</i> (P1, P3, P4, P10, P12, P19).
3. Searching for themes	Related codes were grouped into broader themes that captured recurring concepts and patterns in the data.	Themes: economic barriers, educational achievement, community leadership and contribution
4. Reviewing themes	Themes were refined to ensure they were distinct and represented the data accurately, consolidating overlapping ideas.	Refinement: Merging “desire for better jobs” into economic stability and empowerment.
5. Defining and naming themes	Themes were clearly defined to represent the participants’ perspectives and labeled appropriately to reflect their meaning.	Final Themes: economic barriers, resource deficiency, educational achievement.
6. Producing the final report	Themes were presented and contextualized, supported by direct participant quotes to ensure authenticity	Report Example: Economic barriers reflect struggles with income, as one parent stated, ‘ <i>Our earnings are really insufficient.</i> ’ (P3, P5)

3. RESULTS

3.1. Challenges of the Batak Parents

The challenges experienced by Batak parents in relation to their children's education reflect systemic barriers and inequities. Through thematic analysis, their responses point to three primary themes: Economic Barriers, Resource Deficiency, and Curriculum-Related Challenges [Table 2]. These themes reveal how financial struggles, limited access to educational resources, and difficulties with the curriculum affect the educational experiences of their children.

Table 2. Selected codes and emerging themes for challenges.

Theme	Code	Sample Response
Economic barriers	Insufficient income	“ <i>Our earnings are really insufficient. We work hard and take any job to have money for food</i> ” -P3.
	Children missing school due to work	“ <i>Sometimes our children can’t go to school; we make them help with work to earn money</i> ” -P9.
	Difficulty finding stable jobs	“ <i>We really don’t have jobs, that’s why we struggle. We work, we take any job to make money</i> ” -P6.
	Desire for financial assistance	“ <i>If only someone could help us by providing jobs so we could have an income</i> ” -P5.
Resource deficiency	Lack of computers and modern technology	“ <i>They don’t have computers at school. They need to learn how to use them so they won’t struggle in high school</i> ” -P17.
	Inadequate learning materials	“ <i>They really lack equipment at school; they don’t have computers</i> ” -P1.
	Geographic isolation	“ <i>Maybe it’s because of the distance and we don’t have electricity, so they don’t have computers</i> ” -P10.
	Parents trying to compensate with minimal means	“ <i>We try to buy at least a cellphone for them to use</i> ” -P14.
Curriculum-related challenges	Struggles with standardized exams	“ <i>Their scores on the exam are low because they say it’s difficult</i> ” -P11.
	Language barriers	“ <i>The subjects they are studying in school are difficult, and they also struggle to understand English</i> ” -P12.
	Overwhelming academic workload	“ <i>They say that there are many tasks being assigned at school now, and they are finding it a bit difficult</i> ” -P8.

3.1.1. Theme 1: Economic barriers

Economic hardships significantly affect Batak parents, who face financial constraints linked to their socio-economic situation. Many rely on subsistence activities, such as gathering *Almaciga resin* or low-

paying jobs. One parent (P3) stated, *“Our earnings are really insufficient. We work hard and take any job to have money for food”*; this illustrates their daily struggle just to meet basic needs amid unpredictable income.

This economic instability reflects broader systemic issues perpetuating poverty in indigenous communities (Tajolosa & Tajolosa, 2022) and directly impacts children's education. Parents often prioritize immediate survival over schooling; one (P9) shared, *“Sometimes our children can't go to school; we make them help with work to earn money.”* This reveals the tension between survival and educational goals, with literature indicating that economic hardship leads to decreased parental involvement in education and lower expectations for children (Zhang et al., 2020). Other research emphasizes the strain on family dynamics under financial stress which results in reduced educational support for children (Asadi, 2024).

Despite these challenges, parents show a strong commitment to education as a means of escaping poverty. One parent (P11) expressed, *“We tell them to study well so we can rise from poverty”* which demonstrated that they have hope and determination to break the cycle of poverty through learning. Parents often make sacrifices, such as working extra hours. Studies support that families prioritize education for upward mobility despite economic barriers (Zhang et al., 2020).

The economic challenges facing the Batak community are intensified by systemic neglect. The lack of specific livelihood programs reveals the need for strategic interventions, including community-based economic support and scholarships to reduce financial burdens related to education. Research indicates effective poverty alleviation must address the specific needs of marginalized groups by providing culturally relevant educational resources and economic opportunities (Pulgar et al., 2015). Tajolosa and Tajolosa stress the importance of economic empowerment initiatives that can create sustainable livelihoods, which reduces reliance on informal labor.

The intersection of economic barriers and educational access is vital for understanding broader community development implications. Studies show that combining economic empowerment with educational support can significantly improve outcomes for disadvantaged groups (Hostinar & Miller, 2019). Thus, addressing the economic barriers faced by Batak families is essential for their survival, educational success, and community resilience, with Hostinar and Miller's review pointing to the significance of protective factors that can mitigate the adverse effects of economic hardship on children (Hostinar & Miller, 2019).

3.1.2. Theme 2: Resource deficiency

The lack of educational resources poses a significant barrier to learning for Batak children. Parents have noted the absence of computers, modern tools, and basic facilities in schools. A parent (P17) stated: *“They don't have computers at school. They need to learn how to use them so they won't struggle in high school.”*

This lack of technology limits digital literacy and puts Batak children at a disadvantage compared to urban peers (Baldezamo, 2024). Geographic isolation also plays a role, as a participant (P9) mentioned: *“Maybe it's because of the distance and we don't have electricity, so they don't have computers.”* This remoteness hinders access to basic utilities, which affects educational opportunities (Alqahtani & Alharbi, 2021). Financial constraints lead parents to rely on cellphones instead of traditional learning materials; this creates further gaps in education. *“We try to buy at least a cellphone for them to use,”* a parent (P14) shared. While mobile devices can aid learning, they cannot replace structured educational resources (Akinrinola et al., 2020; Fajri, 2023).

Parents emphasize the urgent need for resources such as computers, internet access, electricity, and culturally relevant materials for Batak schools. Partnerships with NGOs could enhance access and equity in education. Integrating local knowledge into curricula has proven effective in improving engagement for indigenous students (Purba et al., 2017).

The challenges faced by Batak children are common across indigenous education in the Philippines. Revitalizing local folklore can enrich educational materials (Baiduri & Khairani, 2018). Community-based education initiatives that use local wisdom emphasizes the importance of community involvement (Siagian et al., 2018). The lack of educational resources is a widespread issue affecting many indigenous groups in the country.

3.1.3. Theme 3: Curriculum-related challenges

The current curriculum poses challenges for Batak children, especially in standardized testing and language barriers. Many parents (11 out of 24) reported that their children struggle with difficult assessments. One parent stated, *“Their scores on the exam are low because they say it's difficult.”* This issue stems from a disconnect between the curriculum's content and the lived experiences of indigenous students, which usually leads to feelings of alienation and disengagement (Wager et al., 2022).

Language barriers further complicate these challenges, as English is used for instruction and assessment. One parent (P12) remarked, *“The subjects they are studying in school are difficult, and they also struggle to understand English.”* For indigenous children whose first language is not English, this creates a cognitive load that hinders academic performance. Research shows that language proficiency significantly impacts educational outcomes, particularly in non-native language assessments (Ilagan, 2024). Such challenges are common among indigenous students globally, where language issues impede success (Sianturi et al., 2018).

Parents also expressed concern about the heavy workload, which conflicts with familial responsibilities. One parent (P8) noted, *“They say that there are many tasks being assigned at school now, and they are finding it a bit difficult.”* Children already assisting with household or income-generating tasks may find excessive academic demands overwhelming, which detracts from their educational focus (Williams, 2020).

Addressing these curriculum-related challenges requires reforms that cater to indigenous learners. Contextualizing assessments, providing language support, and creating culturally relevant materials could bridge the gap for Batak children. The literature emphasizes culturally sustaining pedagogy, which incorporates students' cultural backgrounds into learning (Miole, 2024).

Training teachers to understand the needs of indigenous communities can promote a more inclusive learning environment. Professional development focusing on cultural competency has been shown to improve outcomes for indigenous students (Chen, 2024). Such training can help educators comprehend the culture of their students, thus contributing to a more equitable educational experience. The challenges faced by Batak children reflect broader issues in indigenous education within the Philippines. The Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) policy aims to address these challenges by promoting indigenous knowledge integration into the curriculum (Webb & Mashford-Pringle, 2022). However, obstacles such as a lack of resources and teacher training can impede effectiveness (Kadonsi, 2023).

Additionally, Ilagan's work stresses the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSPs) into the K to 12 curricula, which suggests that IKSP enhances the relevance of education for indigenous students (Ukala & Agabi, 2017). This approach aligns with the need for contextualized learning experiences that reflect the cultural and linguistic realities of Batak children.

3.2. Aspirations of the Batak Parents

The aspirations of Batak parents for their children encompass a wide range of hopes, reflecting both personal and communal dreams for the future. Based on their responses, three central themes emerged: educational achievement, economic stability and empowerment, and community leadership and contribution [Table 3]. These themes illustrate parents' desires for their children to complete their education, achieve financial security, and contribute meaningfully to their community as leaders and role models

Table 3. Selected codes and emerging themes for aspirations.

Theme	Code	Sample Response
Educational achievement	Desire for children to graduate	<i>“We really dream that they will finish their studies so their lives can change” -P1.</i>
	Efforts to secure scholarships	<i>“I want them to finish their studies, so we are really looking for a scholarship for them” -P3.</i>
	Education as a tool for change	<i>“We really want them to finish their studies so they can help us rise from poverty” -P5.</i>
Economic stability and empowerment	Financial independence	<i>“We really want them to finish their studies so they can find good jobs” -P2.</i>
	Ability to support family financially	<i>“They are now helping us, especially in the education of their siblings” -P10.</i>
	Living a life free from struggles	<i>“No longer struggling and can now afford what they want” -P7.</i>
Community leadership and contribution	Aspiration for leadership roles	<i>“They are already a leader here and successful in life” -P6.</i>
	Desire for children to become teachers	<i>“They are now a teacher here, which is really our dream — that they become teachers so they won’t leave us” -P18.</i>
	Inspiring other youth in the community	<i>“They are now successful and an inspiration here for the youth to strive in their studies” -P11.</i>
	Advocacy for community and cultural heritage	<i>“They have finished their studies and are now our defenders” -P13.</i>

3.2.1. Theme 1: Educational achievement

Batak parents emphasize education as essential for their children's future, aspiring for them to complete their studies to escape cycles of poverty. One parent (P1) expressed, *"We really dream that they will finish their studies so their lives can change and so they won't be like us who didn't go to school."* This sentiment stresses their recognition of education as a pathway to personal and economic development (Khanal, 2023). Many parents actively seek scholarships to overcome financial barriers; this demonstrates that parents are invested to their children's success. Research indicates that access to scholarships can significantly improve educational outcomes for marginalized communities (Heck et al., 2023).

Education equips Batak children with skills to navigate a changing world, offering economic benefits and social mobility (Schultz et al., 2018). This aligns with Khanal's findings on the transformative potential of educational attainment. The aspirations of Batak parents resonate with the Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) policy in the Philippines, aimed at integrating indigenous culture into education (Schultz et al., 2018), though challenges remain, such as resource limitations (Hafid, 2023). Mulyana advocates for recognizing cultural identity within education, which aligns with Batak parents' hopes for their children to achieve success while maintaining cultural heritage (Mulyana, 2023).

Culturally responsive pedagogy is vital in supporting indigenous students, as it incorporates their backgrounds into the curriculum, which then helps bridge the gap between traditional practices and cultural realities (Adeoye et al., 2024). Thus, the educational aspirations of Batak parents reflect a commitment to breaking the cycle of poverty through academic success which indicates the need for policies that value indigenous knowledge and culture to promote inclusive educational environment.

3.2.2. Theme 2: Economic stability and empowerment

Economic security is a key aspiration for Batak parents, closely linked to their hopes for their children's educational success. They believe that completing school will lead to stable, well-paying jobs that will break their families' financial struggles. One parent (P2) noted, *"We really want them to finish their studies so they can find good jobs,"* this shows that they associate education with stable employment. Literature supports this, that educational attainment is correlated with better socio-economic status and quality of life (Chowdhury, 2018). Parents desire for their children to achieve a standard of living that alleviates financial struggle. One parent (P7) expressed, *"No longer struggling and can now afford what they want,"* which shows their wish for their children to enjoy lives free from hardship. Economic stability significantly influences individual well-being, which later affects health, happiness, and community cohesion (Markidis & Papageorgiou, 2017).

Furthermore, Batak parents' economic aspirations involve expectations of reciprocity, where children support their families financially upon achieving stability. One respondent (P10) shared, *"They are now helping us, especially in the education of their siblings,"* which illustrates the link between individual success and family responsibility. This phenomenon is well-documented in various cultures, where familial obligations shape educational and career aspirations (Hutahaean & Agustina, 2020). Economic empowerment also extends to community contributions, as parents hope their children will support community projects and assist other Batak families. This reflects a 'collectivist mindset', where individual achievements contribute to collective progress. Community-oriented economic development approaches indicate that empowering individuals leads to broader societal benefits (Dasopang et al., 2022).

In the Batak community, aspirations for economic stability align with cultural values like "Dalihan Natolu," which symbolizes mutual support and cooperation. This framework encourages contributions to family and community welfare which reinforces the link between personal success and collective well-being (Sagala et al., 2022). Batak parents' goals resonate with narratives in local Philippine literature, where the Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) policy aims to enhance indigenous student relevance within education (Tanjung, 2024). However, it faces challenges, including insufficient resources and educator training that impede effectiveness (Markidis & Papageorgiou, 2017).

Moreover, the need to recognize and preserve indigenous cultures within educational systems. He argues for education that balances academic success with cultural identity and community resilience (Sagala et al., 2022). This approach aligns with Batak parents' aspirations for their children to achieve educational success while maintaining strong cultural ties. Lastly, community empowerment through education is vital for addressing the economic aspirations of indigenous communities, advocating for inclusive curricula that consider students' cultural backgrounds (Hutahaean & Agustina, 2020). By acknowledging the experiences and knowledge of Batak children, educators can bridge traditional educational practices with indigenous realities.

3.2.3. Theme 3: Community leadership and contribution

Many Batak parents aspire for their children to contribute to the well-being and development of their community. They view education as a means not only for personal success but also for strengthening the Batak cultural and social fabric. This perspective aligns with studies that emphasize education's role in enhancing community engagement and leadership among indigenous groups (Bada, 2024). Parents expressed hopes that their children would assume leadership roles, with one (P6) stating, *"They are already a leader here and successful in life."* This illustrates the belief that education prepares children to advocate for their community and address systemic challenges. Sarong (2023) indicated that higher educational attainment is linked to greater civic engagement and leadership among marginalized communities. By equipping their children with skills and knowledge, parents aim to cultivate leaders committed to their cultural heritage.

Teaching emerged as a highly valued profession, with two parents aspiring for their children to become educators. One (P18) parent remarked, *"They are now a teacher here, which is really our dream — that they become teachers so they won't leave us."* This expresses a desire for their children to gain opportunities while remaining connected to their cultural identity. Culturally relevant education is crucial, as it enhances learning outcomes and builds community pride (Messmore & Davis, 2020).

Some parents envision their children inspiring others within the community. A parent (P11) noted, *"They are now successful and an inspiration here for the youth to strive in their studies."* This perspective reflects a belief that their children's achievements can motivate other Batak youth to pursue education, which then eventually create a ripple effect of progress. Research indicates that role models significantly influence the aspirations of young people in underrepresented communities (Andriansyah, 2024).

Community contribution extends beyond teaching and leadership. Some parents see their children as protectors of cultural heritage. A participant (P13) stated, *"They have finished their studies and are now our defenders,"* which tells us that they are also expecting educated individuals to advocate for indigenous rights and preserve Batak traditions. Literature emphasizes cultural advocacy among indigenous leaders as vital for bridging communities with external entities (Igcasama, 2023).

The aspirations of Batak parents resonate with broader narratives in indigenous education in the Philippines. The Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) policy seeks to integrate indigenous knowledge into the educational system, to enhance educational relevance for indigenous students (Graham, 2024). However, its implementation faces challenges such as insufficient resources and educator training, which may impede fulfilling the aspirations of indigenous families (Sabol, 2014).

Mulyana's work emphasizes the need for respecting and preserving indigenous cultures within educational frameworks, arguing that education must encompass cultural identity and community resilience. This viewpoint mirrors Batak parents' hopes for their children to achieve academic success while maintaining a strong cultural connection. Furthermore, community empowerment through education is essential in addressing the aspirations of indigenous communities, to promote the incorporation of students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum for a more inclusive learning environment (Noopila & Pichon, 2020).

3.3. Insights for Educational Policies and Practices for Batak IPs

Responses from Batak parents show a strong connection between education, economic stability, and community leadership, which emphasized the need for culturally relevant policies that address the specific needs of the Batak indigenous people community [Figure 1].

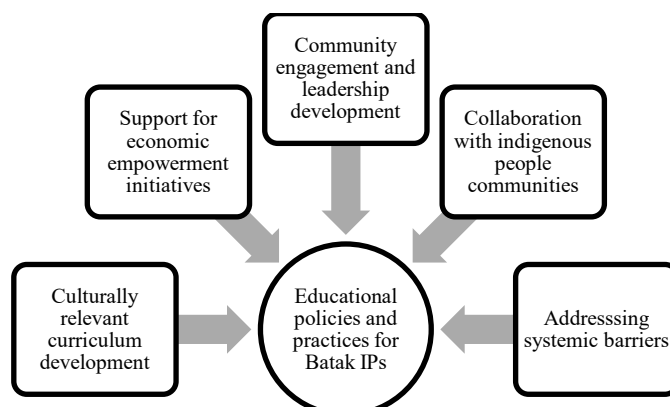


Figure 1. Emerged educational policies and practices for Batak IPs

3.3.1. Culturally relevant curriculum development

A key finding is the necessity for a curriculum that reflects the cultural heritage and values of the Batak community. Parents want their children to receive an education that prepares them for employment while preserving their cultural identity. This aligns with Jacob et al. (2018), who argue that educational policies should include indigenous languages and cultural content to promote belonging for indigenous students. Integrating local knowledge into the curriculum can create a more engaging and relevant learning environment for Batak children.

3.3.2. Support for economic empowerment initiatives

The aspirations of Batak parents for economic stability indicate the need for educational policies that create pathways to employment. This includes scholarships, vocational training, and partnerships with local industries to facilitate job placements for graduates. Kohl and Hopkins (2020) suggest that educational systems should equip students with both academic and practical skills to enhance employability. Policies that promote economic empowerment through education can help break the cycle of poverty.

3.3.3. Community engagement and leadership development

The study stresses the importance of developing leadership skills among indigenous youth. Parents hope their children will take on leadership roles within the Batak community. Educational policies should include leadership training and community engagement initiatives that encourage active participation. Jacob et al. (2018) note that incorporating indigenous knowledges into educational frameworks can enhance self-determination and community resilience. Programs promoting civic engagement can cultivate a new generation of advocates for indigenous rights and cultural preservation.

3.3.4. Collaboration with indigenous communities

The findings emphasize the need for ongoing dialogue and collaboration between educational institutions and indigenous communities. Policies should be developed in partnership with community members to reflect Batak values and aspirations. This approach aligns with the Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) policy in the Philippines, which aims to integrate indigenous knowledge into the educational system (Miole, 2024). Involving indigenous communities in policy-making can lead to more inclusive and effective educational frameworks.

3.3.5. Addressing systemic barriers

Finally, the study addresses systemic barriers that indigenous families face in accessing quality education. Policies must tackle issues such as economic disparities, geographic isolation, and language barriers that hinder educational attainment for Batak children. Cruz (2020) states that effective educational policies should consider the socio-economic status of indigenous communities and strive for equitable access to resources. This includes investments in infrastructure, transportation, and support services to facilitate educational access for remote communities.

4. DISCUSSION

The challenges and aspirations of Batak parents provide important perspectives into the systemic barriers their children face in accessing education and their deep-seated hopes for future opportunities. These findings stressed the intersection of socio-economic struggles, resource inequities, cultural resilience, and educational aspirations, which offers a foundation for policies and practices that can address these needs comprehensively.

The challenges faced by Batak parents emphasized the entrenched systemic inequities affecting indigenous communities. Economic barriers, resource deficiencies, and curriculum-related challenges emerged as primary themes, each interwoven with the broader socio-economic and educational landscape of marginalized groups.

Economic instability emerged as the most pervasive issue, where parents often prioritize survival over education. The reliance on subsistence activities and informal jobs limits their capacity to support their children's schooling. This aligns with findings by Zhang et al. (2020), which identified financial constraints as a significant predictor of low educational engagement among impoverished families. The study also revealed parents' aspirations to break this cycle of poverty, which reflects their resilience and determination to leverage education as a tool for socio-economic mobility. Addressing these economic challenges requires targeted interventions, such as scholarships, livelihood programs, and community-based income generation initiatives.

The lack of access to modern educational resources, such as computers and internet connectivity, compounds the disadvantages faced by Batak children. Geographic isolation further exacerbates this issue, limiting the availability of basic utilities like electricity and infrastructure for education. Baldezamo (2024) and Alqahtani and Alharbi (2021) both highlight the significant disparities in digital literacy and resource accessibility between rural and urban learners. Despite these challenges, parents' efforts to provide alternative resources, like mobile phones, demonstrate their commitment to their children's education. However, these measures are insufficient without systemic support. Partnerships with NGOs and government programs could bridge these gaps by providing essential resources and ensuring equitable access to technology and culturally relevant materials (Purba et al., 2017).

The curriculum's misalignment with the cultural and linguistic realities of Batak learners represents a significant barrier. Parents reported their children's struggles with standardized exams, language barriers, and overwhelming workloads, which resonate with global findings on the alienation of indigenous students in mainstream education systems (Sianturi et al., 2018; Wager et al., 2022). Contextualizing the curriculum to include indigenous knowledge and providing language support can help bridge this gap. Culturally sustaining pedagogies, as advocated by Miole (2024), have been shown to enhance engagement and academic success among indigenous learners. Furthermore, professional development for teachers to understand and address the needs of indigenous students is critical for creating inclusive and equitable educational environments (Chen, 2024).

Despite the significant challenges, Batak parents hold strong aspirations for their children, emphasizing the transformative potential of education. Their dreams align with three key themes: educational achievement, economic stability and empowerment, and community leadership and contribution.

Batak parents view education as a pathway out of poverty and a means to secure a better future for their children. Their emphasis on scholarships reflects a proactive approach to overcoming financial barriers. This finding aligns with research by Heck et al. (2023), which highlights the role of scholarships in improving educational access for marginalized communities. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives depends on addressing underlying resource limitations and integrating cultural identity into the educational framework (Schultz et al., 2018). Culturally responsive pedagogy is essential for bridging traditional practices and modern education, enabling indigenous learners to succeed academically while preserving their heritage (Adeoye et al., 2024).

The desire for economic independence and financial stability is central to Batak parents' aspirations. They hope education will equip their children with the skills needed to secure stable employment and break free from the cycle of poverty. Chowdhury (2018) emphasizes that educational attainment significantly improves socio-economic outcomes, which reinforces the need for policies that link education with vocational training and job placement opportunities. Parents also expect their children to contribute financially to the family; this reflects a collectivist cultural mindset. Programs that balance individual success with community empowerment, such as Dalihan Natolu (Sagala et al., 2022), can amplify the benefits of education for both families and the broader community.

Beyond personal success, Batak parents aspire for their children to assume leadership roles and contribute to their community's well-being. They envision their children as role models who inspire others, advocate for indigenous rights, and preserve their cultural heritage. This aligns with Sarong's (2023) findings on the connection between education, civic engagement, and leadership among marginalized groups. Educational policies should include leadership training and community engagement initiatives that prepare indigenous students to become advocates for their communities (Jacob et al., 2018). The emphasis on teaching as a valued profession further reflects the parents' hopes for their children to remain connected to their cultural roots while achieving professional success.

To implement the suggested policies effectively, specific strategies must be grounded in sustained community involvement, inter-agency collaboration, and resource allocation that reflects the unique needs of the Batak Indigenous People. First, culturally relevant curriculum development can begin with participatory workshops involving Batak elders, educators, and curriculum specialists to co-create modules that integrate Batak history, language, and livelihood practices. Second, local government units and education stakeholders should jointly design economic empowerment programs, such as scholarship schemes tied to academic performance and vocational training fitted to local industries like sustainable agriculture, handicrafts, or eco-tourism. Third, to improve community leadership, schools can establish student-led civic groups and mentorship programs that connect youth with Batak leaders and NGOs. Fourth, collaborative policy-making structures should be institutionalized through Indigenous Education Councils, so that Batak voices are represented in regional and national education planning. Lastly, infrastructure investments such as mobile classrooms, teacher housing, and community-based learning centers must be prioritized to overcome geographic and logistical barriers.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has revealed the complex challenges and aspirations of Batak parents concerning their children's education. The qualitative data collected point to an urgent need for strategic interventions that address the specific circumstances encountered by the Batak community. As noted, the absence of targeted livelihood programs and the geographic isolation of the Batak people significantly hinder educational opportunities; this prompts the need for community-based economic support and educational resources that respect local culture.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that Batak parents strongly believe education contributes to improved socio-economic status and quality of life. However, the pressure of immediate survival needs often forces families to prioritize work over education, which perpetuate cycles of poverty. This situation is made worse by the obstacles faced by Indigenous Peoples Education (IPeD) teachers, who find it difficult to develop students' skills due to limited resources and insufficient training in cultural competency. Future research should explore the development and impact of culturally responsive, community-driven education and livelihood programs that align with the Batak parents' aspirations and address the systemic barriers faced by indigenous learners and educators.

The study also stresses the importance of including local knowledge and cultural identity in educational systems, which can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment for Batak children. By revitalizing local folklore and involving community members in policy development, educational initiatives can better mirror the values and ambitions of the Batak people.

As we consider the aspirations of Batak parents, it becomes evident that education serves not just as a means for individual accomplishment, but also as a crucial instrument for breaking the cycle of poverty and strengthening community resilience. The time has come to turn these hopes into policies that not only uplift the Batak community but also serve as a model for overcoming the challenges faced by indigenous populations. In this effort, we must remember: the future of Batak children rests not only in their hands but also in ours.

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Voices from the field: A narrative case study on inclusive education as reflection for practice, policy, and research

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ABSTRACT

This narrative case study explored the lived experiences of teachers involved in four inclusive education programs under the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Davao Region: Special Education (SPED), Indigenous Peoples Education (IPED), the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), and the Alternative Learning System (ALS). Two teachers per program, from a specific locality, shared in-depth narratives. Using Cortazzi's narrative analysis framework, the study examined how educators interpret and navigate their teaching contexts. Eight initial themes emerged and were synthesized into four core themes representing each program. SPED emphasized high-quality education through integrated assessment and differentiated instruction. IPED focused on inclusivity, equity, and opportunity for Indigenous learners. The 4Ps narratives highlighted equitable access and teacher support, while ALS underscored collaboration and impactful teaching to foster inclusive excellence. These findings revealed the power of teacher narratives in shaping inclusive education. The study advocates for integrating these insights into practice, policy, and research to create a more equitable and responsive educational system for all learners.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has been globally recognized as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of equitable, quality education. Rooted in the frameworks of Education for All (EFA), Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), it aimed to eliminate disparities in access to learning for marginalized populations such as children with disabilities, ethnic minorities, working children, and those in conflict-affected areas (Hardy & Woodcock, 2023). Inclusive education was regarded as a dynamic, evolving process that sought to provide all learners regardless of ability or background—with equitable learning opportunities in non-discriminatory environments (Oswal et al., 2025). Education systems across the world had been shifting toward systemic inclusion, identifying four unifying principles: a human rights-based framework, responsiveness to the needs of marginalized groups, community involvement, and holistic systemic reform (Roberts & Simpson, 2016). While “integration” and “mainstreaming” were once prevalent in Western discourse, the term “inclusion” became preferred for its emphasis on full participation and systemic transformation (Thomazet, 2009).

In the Philippines, special education (SPED) and general education (GenEd) have evolved independently, resulting in uneven responses to inclusive education. Some existing policies in both fields present challenges to effective inclusive education implementation. Differences and overlaps were identified across eight key domains: learners, governance, curriculum, instruction, teacher development, assessment, environment, and sustainability. There is a need for a unified approach to align efforts and address gaps in policy and practice toward inclusive education in the Philippines (Wong & Alcantara-Doroja, 2015).

Among these programs, ALS served as a parallel learning system designed to meet the needs of out-of-school youth and adult learners, as legislated under the Basic Education Governance Act of 1991. Executive Order No. 356 institutionalized ALS by transforming the Bureau of Non-Formal Education into

the Bureau of Alternative Learning System, thereby expanding its capacity to serve “deprived, depressed, and underserved” populations. Similarly, the 4Ps program administered by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in collaboration with DepEd, the Department of Health (DOH), and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) provided conditional cash transfers to promote education and health.

Despite initiatives in the indigenous education, systemic challenges persisted. Geographic isolation, inadequate infrastructure, and deep-rooted poverty continued to restrict educational access for many Filipino learners (Mirasol et al., 2021). Moreover, successful inclusive practices were highly dependent on teachers’ beliefs, competencies, and access to professional growth. Teacher attitudes significantly influenced the implementation of inclusive education (Muega, 2016), while Radojlovic et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of self-efficacy, positive dispositions, and continuous professional training. Manguilimotan et al. (2024) further affirmed the dedication of Filipino teachers, particularly those supported through localized, school-based capacity-building efforts.

Nonetheless, gaps in policy implementation and academic research remained. Finkelstein et al. (2019) emphasized the need for research-based frameworks in professional development and the systematic assessment of inclusive teaching. Guillemot et al. (2022) called for clearer articulation of teacher expectations in inclusive settings, while Berrío et al. (2020) underscored the pressing need for more personnel trained in differentiated instruction. In the Philippine context, Macabenta et al. (2023) pointed to the necessity of exploring teachers’ lived experiences, particularly their sources of stress and resilience, to inform sustainable inclusive policies.

At the regional level, particularly in Region XI, inclusive education had been implemented through various modalities. According to the Basic Education Information System (2022), for School Year 2021–2022, there were 124 SPED enrollees, 4,361 IP learners, 3,505 ALS participants, and 1,259 students supported by the 4Ps program. These figures reflected both a strong regional commitment and the complexities associated with scaling inclusive practices.

In light of these global, national, and regional developments, this study employed a qualitative narrative case study approach to explore the lived experiences of secondary school teachers involved in inclusive education. As Riessman (2007) explained, narrative inquiry enabled researchers to understand how individuals constructed meaning from their experiences. Through in-depth storytelling, this study aimed to provide actionable insights for school leaders and policymakers in designing inclusive systems responsive to the contexts of Filipino learners.

By foregrounding the narratives of teachers navigating inclusive classrooms, the study offered a platform for self-reflection, voice, and agency. Narrative methodology empowered participants to articulate their thoughts, emotions, and practices in meaningful ways. Hancock (2002) emphasized that narrative research was “concerned with the opinions, pieces of knowledge, and feelings of individuals, producing subjective data and describing social phenomena as they occur.” Drawing on a bottom-up paradigm and Gibson’s (2014) ecological learning theory, this study positioned teachers as agents of transformation—asserting that inclusive education was most impactful when shaped by those who worked closest to the learners.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Design

This study employed a qualitative research design that combined narrative inquiry and narrative case study approaches to explore the lived experiences of teachers involved in four inclusive education programs in the Philippines: SPED, IPed, 4Ps, and ALS. Each program served as a distinct case (Creswell, 2013), enabling a focused, context-rich analysis of inclusive practices.

Guided by Cortazzi’s (1993) framework, narrative inquiry facilitated the collection and interpretation of personal stories, capturing how teachers constructed meaning, responded to challenges, and shaped their professional identities within inclusive settings. This methodological integration allowed for a deeper understanding of both individual experiences and systemic influences on inclusive education.

Ethical considerations were observed through participant anonymization. The diverse backgrounds of the teachers enriched the data, revealing both barriers and transformative moments in inclusive teaching. The findings emphasized inclusive education as a reflective and responsive practice shaped by teacher agency and collaboration—offering valuable insights for educational leaders and policymakers.

2.2. Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in the Department of Basic Education public schools in Region XI. One (1) participant per school was chosen among the eight (8) identified city school division offices within the region, namely: Mati City Division, Davao City Division, Davao Occidental Division, Tagum City Division, IGACOS Division, Digos City Division, Panabo City Division, and Davao de Oro Division. The participants in the study were teachers facilitating inclusive education. Participants were purposefully chosen based on their qualifications and criteria for inclusion, availability, and willingness to participate in the study. The interviews were done with the utmost consideration of their schedules and work locations. This study revolved around the narratives of teachers involved in implementing inclusive education.

2.3. Sampling

This study used a purposive sampling method to select participants who were "information rich" (Patton, 2025), which was appropriate for the research inquiry. Credibility criteria like knowledge of the subject of investigation, willingness, and ability to articulate and share their life narratives were used to select participants. The study included eight research participants who experienced facilitating inclusive education programs. These teachers had at least five years of teaching experience in SPED, IPs, 4PS, and ALS programs. Participants were selected purposively and focused on schools' divisions in Region XI known for their active and robust implementation of inclusive education. The rich and detailed narratives were gathered by involving these participants, which could offer deeper insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2013).

2.4. Research Instrument

A researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide served as the primary instrument for collecting rich, qualitative data from teachers facilitating inclusive education programs. The guide comprised open-ended questions aimed at eliciting in-depth narratives about participants' experiences, instructional strategies, challenges, perceptions of inclusion, and professional growth. These questions were closely aligned with the study's objectives and were framed around key themes such as teacher identity, agency, and classroom practices in inclusive settings.

To ensure content validity, the interview guide underwent expert evaluation by three professionals: one Alternative Learning System (ALS) Supervisor, one School Head, and one Master Teacher. Their insights and suggestions were carefully reviewed and integrated into the final version of the instrument (Zohrabi, 2013). A pilot test was subsequently conducted with teachers who were not part of the main study sample. In line with best practices in qualitative research (Turner, 2014), this pilot testing helped verify the clarity, relevance, and effectiveness of the questions. Based on the feedback, the guide was refined and supplemented with additional prompts to ensure that the interview items aligned with the research goals and elicited meaningful, reflective responses (Syed, 2015).

2.5. Data Gathering Procedures

The narrative interview method was employed, with individual semi-structured interviews conducted to capture in-depth personal accounts from teachers involved in inclusive education (Kim, 2016). Clear protocols for data collection were established, including defined research boundaries and recording procedures. After the research instrument had been approved, formal permission to conduct the study was requested from the Regional Director of Region XI. Endorsement letters were subsequently sent to eleven School Division Superintendents to allow access to teacher participants. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online at times and venues that had been mutually agreed upon. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, objectives, and procedures prior to being interviewed. A guided but flexible interview format was utilized, enabling open, conversational exchanges. This approach allowed teachers to speak freely in their preferred language and to share authentic narratives of their experiences in inclusive education.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

This study adopted reciprocity, confidentiality, informed consent, data access, and ownership. All transcripts, pictures, notes, and audiotapes were kept by the researcher for security reasons and equally to protect the importance and value of stories, ideas, and opinions of teachers facilitating the implementation of inclusive education. During the conduct of the study, an informed consent form or written communication for the study's conduct and a letter requesting an endorsement from the Schools Division Superintendent prior to the meeting of the teachers were prepared by the researcher. Confidentiality, protecting the anonymity of the stakeholders through number codes, was maintained by the researcher, and respect for one's ideas and views was assured to the participants.

2.7. Data Analysis

After collecting and transcribing the narratives of teachers facilitating inclusive education, Polkinghorne's (2007) narrative analysis was employed. The process began by identifying small, event-focused stories within the narratives, drawing on Cortazzi's (1993) approach. These stories, typically in the past tense and temporally ordered, were analyzed to identify common themes. The coding process followed Labov's (1972) Evaluation Model of Tales, which categorizes narratives into six components: (1) abstract – a brief introduction or purpose; (2) orientation – context and characters; (3) complicating action – the sequence of events; (4) evaluation – the meaning or significance of the story; (5) result – the resolution or outcome; and (6) coda – a return to the present. This framework, based on sociolinguistic principles, helped in understanding how the narratives functioned within the social context of inclusive education. By analyzing these components, the research aimed to extract themes reflecting the teachers' evolving understanding of their roles in inclusive education.

3. RESULTS

This study examines teachers' narratives in inclusive education, offering valuable insights for practice, policy, and future research. It focuses on four key programs under the Department of Education: (SPED), (IPED), (4Ps), and (ALS). Through narrative analysis, eight central themes emerged: (1) commitment and effective assessment, (2) customized instruction for diverse learners, (3) pursuit of academic excellence, (4) empowerment through education, (5) inclusivity and equity, (6) teacher preparation and support, (7) collaboration, and (8) dedicated, impactful teaching. These themes were synthesized into four program-specific categories: SPED: Emphasizing tailored instruction, commitment, and assessment to improve learning outcomes; IPED: Promoting equity and opportunities for Indigenous learners; 4Ps: Advancing educational access through inclusive practices and teacher support; and, ALS: Fostering inclusive excellence through collaboration and transformative teaching. These narratives highlight the essential role of inclusive education in creating responsive and equitable learning environments for all students.

3.1. Case I: Narrative Case Study on SPED: Optimizing High -Quality Education through Integrating Assessment and Commitment, and Tailored Instruction for Program Success

Teacher Rubi and Teacher Chen play a vital role in SPED, combining expertise and empathy to support diverse learners. Through individualized instruction, inclusive practices, and a nurturing environment, they help students with special needs thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

3.1.1. Story of SPED Teacher Rubi on Optimizing High-Quality Education through Integrating Assessment and Commitment

Abstract. The narrative originated from the act of storytelling. Teacher Rubi commenced by sharing her direct involvement in implementing inclusive education and how their school actively establishes an Inclusive Learning Resource Center. She said: *"I participated in a training program that specifically focused on inclusive education. Our school is actively competing to establish an Inclusive Learning Resource Center."*

Orientation. Teacher Rubi describes the necessary details and appreciates the inclusive education program. She asserted: *"Inclusive education goes beyond catering solely to Special Education (SPED) learners. It encompasses learners from diverse backgrounds, such as Indigenous Peoples Education (IPED) and Alternative Learning System (ALS), and those classified as 4Ps learners are considered among the most marginalized and vulnerable."*

Complicating Action. Teacher Rubi explicitly states that implementing the SPED program is highly complex, considering the numerous obstacles that must be overcome. Many classrooms have a prevalent issue of inadequate resources and the need for proper equipment. She declared: *"The majority of classrooms need to be equipped with the necessary resources."*

Evaluation. The school has implemented essential practices to guarantee optimal teaching, fairness, and support for marginalized and vulnerable learners in the Special Education (SPED) program. A thorough assessment is necessary to determine suitable placements for learners of all types. She uttered: *"Proper assessment should be conducted to ensure appropriate placement for all types of learners."*

Result. Data revealed that early detection through accurate assessment proved the most effective approach. Subsequently, it would identify the learners in need and ensure they receive the necessary intervention and care by placing them appropriately. She declared: *"We found that early detection through appropriate assessment was the most effective approach. Following this, we would identify the learners and provide them with necessary intervention and care through proper placement."*

Coda. Teacher Rubi concluded her story by pleading for the proper evaluation of all implemented programs, projects, and activities, particularly those related to inclusive education. She emphasized the

importance of assessment as a feedback mechanism to ensure these programs' effectiveness and continuous improvement. She stated: *"If granted an audience with higher authority, I propose conducting a comprehensive assessment of every program, project, and activity to obtain valuable, crucial feedback."*

3.1.2. Story of SPED Teacher Chen on Creating Engaging and Tailored Instructional Materials for Diverse Learners

Abstract. Teacher Chen started her story by emphasizing the collaborative endeavors of the school principal, teachers, and stakeholders. She conveyed: *"The school principal and teachers have been proactive in taking the lead, creating and implementing innovative measures, in addition to the existing programs, specifically for learners with special needs."*

Orientation. Teacher Chen highlighted that the school's exceptional execution of inclusive education initiatives, specifically in special education (SPED), has been acknowledged and rewarded. The school achieved the top position in the recent Regional Monitoring and Evaluation assessment. She articulated: *"The school excels at implementing inclusive education and established the Inclusive Learning Resource Center (ILRC), a prime example of inclusivity in education."*

Complicating Action. Teacher Chen, a seasoned SPED teacher, recalls a memorable challenge with an autistic learner, despite her experience with students with intellectual disabilities. She struggled with the learner's unpredictable behavior, highlighting the complexities of inclusive education. The experience underscores the need for collective responsibility and comprehensive training for all teachers, not just SPED educators to effectively support diverse learners in inclusive classrooms. She shared: *"While all teachers are expected to implement inclusive education, regular school teachers often need more training."*

Evaluation. Teacher Chen stressed the importance of dedication in teaching and shared strategies for adapting methods to meet diverse learner needs. The school supported SPED students with varied resources and communication aids. She emphasized language stimulation, gestures, visual cues, and engaging activities to boost learning and responsibility, while also creating materials tailored to individual abilities and interests. She stated: *"I have created instructional materials specifically tailored to match our diverse learners' learning abilities and interests."*

Result. Teacher Chen used checklists to assess learners' behavior, aiding in proper placement and tagging in the LIS for government support. She emphasized engaging activities to boost responsibility and learning, and highlighted the vital role of external stakeholders in providing resources and support for SPED programs. She said: *"I have implemented a checklist to observe and assess learners based on their behavior. This method allows us to determine the appropriate placement for each child, ensuring a suitable learning environment."*

Coda. Teacher Chen concluded her narrative with a heartfelt expression of hope, emphasizing that the challenges faced by SPED teachers should serve as a powerful reminder to all schools and educators about the shared responsibility of fostering inclusivity in education within the department. She mentioned: *"We hope the challenges SPED teachers face will remind all schools and teachers that inclusivity in education is a responsibility shared by everyone within the Department."*

3.2. Case II: Narrative Case Study on IPED: Empowering Indigenous People (IP) by Promoting Inclusivity, Equity, and Opportunities for All

Indigenous people's education is a transformative approach that honors Indigenous cultures, languages, and knowledge systems while nurturing identity and pride among learners. Teacher Kara and Teacher Eric exemplify this commitment by fostering inclusive, culturally responsive classrooms. Their narratives reveal the challenges they navigate, the strategies they implement, and the meaningful impact they make in the lives of Indigenous students.

3.2.1. Story of IPED Teacher Kara: Nurturing Academic Excellence through Enhancing Inclusivity and Instructional Design

Abstract. Teacher Kara shared her meaningful experience in implementing inclusive education, focusing on preventing discrimination against Indigenous People (IP) learners due to economic status. She fosters a strong sense of belonging, ensuring IP students feel accepted, valued, and supported equally. She expressed: *"I can attest that implementing inclusive education effectively fulfills its intended objective."*

Orientation. Teacher Mara observed the financial struggles faced by the Indigenous People (IP) community in accessing education. Despite lacking basic necessities like packed lunches, IP learners showed strong determination to attend school. These economic challenges greatly impact their ability to enroll and meet educational requirements. She stated: *"The IP community's financial situation poses significant challenges when enrolling in and covering the expenses of their children's education."*

Complicating Action. To surmount these obstacles, Teacher Kara demonstrated exceptional dedication by taking extra steps to learn the language of her Indigenous People (IP) learners. She affirmed: *“Another hurdle encountered was the need for more learning resources.”*

Evaluation. Teacher Kara stressed the need to prioritize teachers' training and provide appropriate learning materials to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive education programs. She said: *“I require additional training to enhance my skills in creating instructional materials tailored to the local community's needs and context.”*

Result. Teacher Kara explicitly expressed that collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders in the Indigenous Peoples (IP) community have played a significant role in addressing the unique needs of these learners. She expressed: *“Indeed, collaboration among the stakeholders in the IP community helped to address the needs of these types of learners.”*

Coda. Teacher Kara emphasized that teacher training is key to effective inclusive education. She believes ongoing professional development equips educators to better meet diverse learner needs. Training helps us understand how to truly support every child in the classroom. She declared: *“Lastly, teachers' training must be considered to implement inclusive education successfully.”*

3.2.2. Story of IPED Teacher Eric: Empowering the Indigenous People (IP) Through Education and Opportunities

Abstract. Teacher Eric began his story by stating that his school is a leading example and innovator in implementing education programs to address Indigenous Peoples' requirements. He stated: *“Our school was chosen as a pilot school for IPED throughout the division.”*

Orientation. Teacher Eric described the Indigenous People (IP) group in their community, known as the “Taga Kulo,” a name reflecting the ideal habitat that provides all essential resources. *“Their ethnic group is recognized as the 'Taga Kulo,' denoting a habitat where all the necessities for sustenance, including water, shelter, and food, are readily available.”*

Complicating Action. Teacher Eric reflected on the challenges of working with Indigenous People (IP) learners, initially struggling with cultural insensitivity. He learned from his mistakes and gained a deeper understanding of their traditions. *“As a TLE teacher focused on agriculture, I taught my students about farming. In the textbooks, 'KAINGIN' is portrayed as a lazy activity, not realizing it held ancestral significance for them. 'KAINGIN' was a traditional practice involving respected figures like Datu and community leaders. Unfortunately, I overlooked their cultural sensitivities due to the misalignment between their practices and our cultural norms.”*

Evaluation. Despite challenges, Teacher Eric launched the program “Huwag pag-aralan ang IP, Pag-aralin ang IP” (Do not just study the Indigenous People; educate the IP), which aims to deepen understanding of Indigenous culture while ensuring IP learners receive the benefits of quality education. He envisions Indigenous individuals who are proud of their heritage and globally competitive. *“We educate them not to change who they are, but to strengthen who they are.”*

Result. Teacher Eric addresses challenges by prioritizing the integration of indigenous people (IP) and their stories into the curriculum, ensuring that the content aligns with their unique narratives and experiences. *“I emphasized integrating Indigenous People (IP) and their stories into the curriculum, ensuring the content closely aligns with their unique narratives and experiences.”*

Coda. Teacher Eric concluded by emphasizing the importance of embracing IP culture and being sensitive to their needs. He stressed the significance of respecting their heritage while addressing their unique requirements to create an inclusive and effective educational environment that fosters IP learners' holistic development. *“By fully embracing their culture, it is essential also to demonstrate sensitivity towards their specific needs.”*

3.3. Case III: Narrative Case Study of Teachers on 4Ps: Advancing Equitable Education via Inclusivity and Teacher Support

These accounts explore the experiences of two exceptional teachers, Teacher Mara and Teacher Ems, who played pivotal roles in facilitating the 4Ps program as part of inclusive education. The (4Ps) is a government initiative designed to alleviate poverty by providing conditional cash transfers to eligible families.

3.3.1. Story of 4Ps Teacher Mara: Inclusivity and Equal Opportunities in Education

Abstract. Teacher Mara embarked on her story by expressing an appreciation for the implementation of the inclusive education program, explicitly highlighting the 4Ps program. This program assists indigent learners, enabling them to overcome economic obstacles and access educational opportunities. She declared: *“The 4Ps program, designed to provide financial assistance*

for educational expenses to those in need, is an effective initiative that supports disadvantaged students.”

Orientation. Teacher Mara further elaborates on her sharing by affirming the substantial support provided by the 4Ps program to underserved learners. She disclosed: *“I can confidently assert that the 4Ps program significantly supports these underprivileged learners.”*

Complicating Action. Teacher Mara faces various challenges as a teacher of 4PS learners. She strongly expressed that indigent learners experienced malnutrition, reading difficulties, and poor academic performance. She divulged: *“The majority of the 4Ps learners identified are those who experience malnutrition, struggle with reading difficulties, and exhibit poor academic performance.”*

Evaluation. Teacher Mara shared that inclusive education supports all learners by embracing diversity, ensuring equal opportunities, and encouraging collaboration and respect. It fosters a sense of belonging, empathy, and social integration, helping students thrive and prepare for an inclusive society. She mentioned: *“Inclusive education is beneficial as it is implemented to embrace, accommodate, and provide equal opportunities for learners of all types.”*

Coda. Teacher Mara highlighted the importance of continuous training to meet the evolving needs of learners and improve teaching practices. She said: *“I desire that such training provides teachers with the essential skills and knowledge to assist learners with special needs effectively.”*

3.3.2. Story of 4Ps Teacher Ems: Essentializing Teacher Preparation and Support in Education

Abstract. Teacher Ems began her recounts by acknowledging the significance of inclusive education, particularly the 4Ps program, which assists disadvantaged learners by covering their educational expenses. She emphasized the value of inclusive education in promoting acceptance and equality for learners of diverse backgrounds and abilities. She spoke: *“I am genuinely grateful for the 4Ps program, which is vital in providing opportunities for underprivileged learners to access education despite their financial challenges.”*

Orientation. Teacher Ems emphasized that inclusive education initiatives extend beyond the 4Ps program, encompassing not only economically disadvantaged learners but also students with disabilities and those from other marginalized groups. She narrated: *“The 4Ps program has been instrumental in providing significant support and meeting the needs of underprivileged learners under my supervision, especially considering that my class belongs to the lowest section.”*

Complicating Action. One notable experience shared by Teacher Ems involved a pregnant student, for whom she prepared learning modules to support continued education through a modular approach. This allowed the student to study independently while managing her personal circumstances. She uttered: *“One of the most unforgettable incidents I encountered was when a student became pregnant. To ensure her educational continuity, I provided modules that enabled her to participate in modular learning.”*

Evaluation. Teacher Ems emphasized the importance of inclusive education training to support students with special needs and those from marginalized backgrounds. She highlighted the role of preparedness in fostering a supportive learning environment. She mentioned: *“DepEd will take necessary measures to ensure teachers are well-prepared, including providing training opportunities and sustainable instructional materials.”*

Result. Teacher Ems prioritizes offering additional support to students with diverse needs to address the challenge. She customizes her teaching materials to cater to their learning abilities and pace, ensuring their inclusion and progress alongside their classmates. She said: *“As an educator, I prioritize supporting students with diverse needs. I tailor my teaching materials to accommodate their unique learning abilities and pace, ensuring their inclusion and progression alongside their peers.”*

Coda. She stressed that such training is vital in equipping educators to effectively support learners with special needs, ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed. She mentioned: *“My earnest request to the Department is that teachers receive comprehensive training on inclusive education. Such training would equip educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively support learners with special needs.”*

3.4. Case IV: Narrative Case Study on ALS: Building a Culture of Inclusive Excellence by Collaboration and Impactful Teaching

This narrative research highlights the experiences of Teachers Rose and Ted, who are instrumental in implementing the Alternative Learning System (ALS) as part of inclusive education. ALS provides flexible learning opportunities for marginalized and underserved learners. Their stories offer valuable insights into the challenges, motivations, and strategies they use to deliver inclusive education, showcasing the transformative impact of ALS on students’ lives.

3.4.1. Story of ALS Teacher Rose: Fostering Collaboration and Commitment in Inclusive Education

Abstract. Teacher Rose began her story by providing an overview of the ALS program, which ensures inclusive education for a broad range of learners, including individuals in SPED, IPed, street children, PDL, OFW, out-of-school youth and adults, abused children, and other marginalized groups. She said: *“The ALS program provides inclusive education for diverse learners, including those in SPED, IPed, street children, PDL, OFW, out-of-school youth and adults, abused children, and marginalized individuals.”*

Orientation. Teacher Rose strongly emphasized the significance of assessment results in determining the appropriate placement of learners. According to her, these assessments serve as a crucial guide in placing students in educational programs or classes that align with their unique needs and abilities. By matching learners with the proper placement, tailored instruction and support can be provided to meet their specific skill levels and learning requirements. She asserted: *“Learners undergo assessments based on numeracy and literacy tests to determine their appropriate placement.”*

Complicating Action. The complicating actions foreshadow the arrival of complex and unpredictable circumstances. Teacher Rose openly acknowledged her difficulties, mainly when teaching out-of-school adults who are resistant to instruction due to their pre-existing knowledge. She uttered: *“Out-of-school adult learners can sometimes be stubborn and resistant to accepting new knowledge due to their prior experiences and age.”*

Evaluation. Teacher Rose upholds that building strong community collaboration is essential to effectively implement inclusive education and provide teachers with the necessary training to support learners of diverse abilities, including those with special needs. She mentioned: *“Strengthening community collaboration is crucial for successfully implementing inclusive education and ensuring that teachers receive the necessary training to effectively support learners of all abilities, particularly those with special needs.”*

Result. Teacher Rose values collaboration with stakeholders as vital in successfully implementing ALS programs, including constructing shelters for senior citizen learners. This experience has instilled in her a deep appreciation for the steadfast dedication and commitment required for authentic teaching. She spoke: *“I actively collaborate with all stakeholders to implement our initiated programs, such as constructing modest shelters for senior citizen learners. Ultimately, teaching by heart requires unwavering dedication and commitment.”*

Coda. Teacher Rose concluded her story by underscoring that, as an educator entrusted with students' education, it is essential to exhibit innovation, resourcefulness, and a commitment to self-study. This resourcefulness includes acquiring basic sign language skills to effectively meet their specific needs. She proclaimed: *“As an educator responsible for their instruction, I must demonstrate innovation and resourcefulness and engage in self-study to learn basic sign language so that I can effectively cater to their needs.”*

3.4.2. Story of ALS Teacher Ted: Fulfilling and Impactful Dedicated Teaching

Abstract. Teacher Ted's narrative commenced by highlighting the Alternative Learning System's recognition and acknowledgment of the diverse nature of learners, encompassing individuals from various backgrounds with distinct learning levels and needs. He stated: *“Our Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners exhibit remarkable diversity in their learning levels and individual needs.”*

Orientation. Teacher Ted explicitly stated that learners undergo assessments, precisely basic literacy and numeracy tests, to determine their appropriate placement according to their skill levels and abilities. He spoke: *“The learners undergo assessment through basic literacy and numeracy tests to determine their suitable placement.”*

Complicating Action. Teacher Ted shared his experiences teaching ALS learners, which presents distinct challenges compared to traditional school environments. One common challenge he faces is learners considering themselves more knowledgeable, leading to resistance toward new ideas and displaying arrogance based on their existing life principles. This is especially true when teaching out-of-school adults. He said: *“A challenge I face is the learners' extensive knowledge and life experience, surpassing our own as teachers. This challenge can result in arrogance and stubbornness as they cling to their established principles.”*

Evaluation. Teacher Ted adopts an approach rooted in honesty and dedication, gradually guiding his learners toward a transformative shift in attitude and a newfound embrace of education. Despite the challenges and personal sacrifices involved, he finds immense fulfillment in teaching, particularly when he witnesses his students' remarkable growth and development. He stated: *“Our sincere teaching and dedication led to transformative changes in our learners. As educators, we understand the sacrifices and efforts involved in this noble profession. Witnessing the growth and development of our learners brings immense fulfillment.”*

Result. Teacher Ted implements effective strategies to address disparities among ALS learners. In addition to the modular program, he conducts home visitations to support absent learners, providing catch-up

opportunities and delivering learning modules directly to their homes. He conveyed: *“Besides the modular program, conducting home visits is a highly effective practice I employ to reach out to learners who cannot attend regular sessions.”*

Coda. Teacher Ted strongly desires to improve the program's resources continuously. Recognizing the ever-evolving needs of the learners, he aims to enhance the available tools, materials, and support systems. He stated: *“I propose enhancing community partnerships through continuous collaboration to ensure the program's long-term sustainability.”*

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Optimizing High-Quality Education through Integrating Assessment, Commitment, and Tailored Instruction for Program Success

The experiences of SPED Teacher Rubi underscore the vital role of proper assessment and strong teacher commitment in the success of SPED programs. Accurate and comprehensive assessments are essential for identifying learners' needs and designing appropriate, individualized interventions. Tools like the Multi-Factored Assessment Tool (MFAT) and the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) checklist help in diagnosing developmental delays and learning difficulties. Lipka et al. (2018) emphasized that quality assessment practices, including performance evaluation and feedback, enhance learning outcomes. However, Muega (2016) reveal that many teachers, especially in rural areas, lack adequate training in inclusive assessment, leading to ineffective teaching practices and limited student engagement.

Improving SPED implementation requires prioritizing early and accurate assessments, using diverse tools, and involving specialists when needed. Educators must adopt inclusive values and practices, while school leaders can support them through School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) sessions, inclusive school planning, and consultation with learners and their families. Institutionalizing inclusive assessment practices and training in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are also crucial. Teacher Rubi's narrative further highlights the importance of commitment—teachers who are passionate and resilient drive student success. Research by Deroncele-Acosta and Ellis (2024) confirms that teacher dedication influences both learner outcomes and school performance. Fostering this commitment involves peer mentoring, recognition, and professional development. Policymakers must invest in resources and support systems that empower teachers and sustain their commitment to inclusive education.

Teacher Chen's narratives emphasize the importance of creating engaging, personalized instructional materials tailored to the diverse needs and abilities of learners in Special Education (SPED) programs. Recognizing the value of differentiated instruction, Chen adapts teaching methods and materials based on students' cognitive abilities, interests, and backgrounds to foster inclusivity and academic success. Research by Barnard and Henn (2023) and Eikeland and Ohna (2022) supports this approach, highlighting the need for teachers to adapt their instruction to meet diverse learner needs. Differentiated instruction, as outlined by Goyibova et al. (2025), involves identifying essential learning outcomes, addressing student differences, and providing meaningful, flexible learning experiences that engage all students. Saborío-Taylor and Rojas-Ramírez (2024) also notes the importance of recognizing varied learning styles and tailoring teaching methods accordingly.

To enhance the effectiveness of these practices, teachers can integrate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles into their teaching strategies, offering diverse content formats and interactive materials that engage all learners. Embracing technology, teachers could develop mobile learning applications for flexible access to instructional materials and integrate gamification elements to motivate students and track their progress. Education leaders should support this approach by providing training on UDL principles, promoting differentiated teaching, and ensuring access to innovative tools that foster an inclusive and dynamic learning environment. This comprehensive policy approach can create a learning atmosphere that not only addresses individual needs but also inspires a passion for learning and academic success.

4.2. Empowering Indigenous People (IP) by Promoting Inclusivity, Equity, and Opportunities for All

The narratives shared by IPED Teacher Kara underscore the importance of enhancing educational excellence to foster holistic development and equip students with essential skills for success in a rapidly changing world. Educational excellence, as highlighted in the teacher's stories, goes beyond academic achievement to encompass fostering skills, values, and critical thinking abilities that are crucial for navigating a global landscape. This concept aligns with Mintrom's (2014) study, which emphasizes that cultivating a culture of excellence in education can motivate students and drive continuous improvement. Similarly, Arriagada-Poblete et al. (2022) noted that excellence in teaching is reflected in factors such as student engagement, effective communication, and the alignment of course content with learning objectives.

Educational excellence ensures that all children, regardless of background, have access to quality learning opportunities that enable them to reach their full potential.

Building on Teacher Kara's insights, educators are encouraged to adopt evidence-based strategies, student-centered learning approaches, and innovative teaching methods to foster a culture of excellence. Policy recommendations include prioritizing funding and resources for teacher professional development and creating inclusive, supportive learning environments that promote student engagement and critical thinking. Future research should explore the integration of teaching methods, technology, and personalized learning, along with the impact of teacher preparation, school leadership, and parent involvement on educational outcomes.

IPED Teacher Eric's narratives emphasize the importance of empowering Indigenous Peoples (IP) through education, recognizing their rights, strengths, and cultural heritage. By fostering inclusive and culturally responsive educational practices, educators can create environments where Indigenous learners can excel academically, preserve their cultural identity, and contribute meaningfully to society. Teacher Eric's approach, particularly through the innovative program "Huwag pag aralan ang IP, Pag-aralin ang IP" (Don't just study IP; let them be the subject of study), underscores the need for sustainable education that nurtures pride in Indigenous culture while preparing learners for global competitiveness. This aligns with Miole (2024) concept of the indigenous peoples' education framework, which emphasizes the localization, indigenization, and contextualization of education to ensure cultural rights. Further, Eduardo and Gabriel (2021) highlighted that indigenous peoples have the right to control their educational systems, providing education in their languages and in a culturally appropriate manner. Continuous support is important to improve the economic and social conditions of Indigenous communities, including access to education.

Building on Teacher Eric's insights, education systems should adopt culturally responsive teaching methods, integrate Indigenous knowledge systems, and expose Indigenous learners to the digital world to foster global competitiveness. Policy recommendations include prioritizing equitable access to quality education and culturally relevant curricula while addressing the socioeconomic challenges faced by Indigenous communities. Preserving Indigenous languages and cultures should be a key focus, and future research should explore the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching, the role of Indigenous languages in education, community involvement, and longitudinal studies on the empowerment of Indigenous Peoples through education.

4.3. Advancing Equitable Education via Inclusivity and Teacher Support

The narratives shared by 4Ps Teacher Mara underscore the theme of inclusivity and equal educational opportunities, emphasizing that every student, regardless of background or circumstance, deserves a chance to thrive. This approach advocates for removing barriers and creating environments where diversity is valued and all students feel a sense of belonging. Mara's focus aligns with the principle that inclusivity provides equitable opportunities, fostering an educational setting that respects students' rights and promotes growth for all. This concept is supported by research from Roldán et al. (2021), who highlighted that inclusion is an educational model designed to ensure equal opportunities for all students. Rossi and Brischetto (2024) also reinforce the idea that diversity, when properly embraced, can foster positive outcomes by appreciating individual qualities free from discrimination. Additionally, Ainscow (2020) found that diversity within schools and communities enhances both academic success and life skills, preparing students for a global, diverse workforce.

Building on Mara's insights, it is crucial that educators implement inclusive practices such as differentiated instruction, support for students with disabilities, and cultural sensitivity. Education leaders should prioritize professional development on inclusive teaching methods and foster a school climate that encourages dialogue and prevents discrimination. Furthermore, comprehensive policies supporting inclusive and equitable education should be implemented to ensure access to quality education for all learners, regardless of their background. Future research should explore the impact of inclusive education on various student outcomes, including academic performance, social integration, and emotional well-being.

The narratives shared by 4Ps Teacher Ems emphasize the critical importance of teacher preparation and support in education, highlighting the need for adequate training and ongoing professional development to equip educators with the necessary skills to address the diverse needs of students. Teacher preparation plays a crucial role in shaping effective teaching practices, especially when it comes to inclusive education, as Ems points out. She stresses the importance of being well-prepared and knowledgeable about inclusive programs like the 4Ps initiative and supporting students with disabilities or those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Research by Theobald et al. (2021), supports the idea that comprehensive training contributes to the retention of well-prepared special education teachers, indicating that beginning teachers who receive robust preparation are more likely to stay in the profession. Additionally, Florian (2019) emphasizes that quality teacher training is vital for promoting inclusive teaching, noting that teachers' preparedness for

inclusive education is often limited by insufficient training in pedagogies and classroom management strategies.

Building on Teacher Ems' insights, it is essential for education leaders to integrate inclusive and special education training into teacher preparation programs. These programs should focus on diverse teaching strategies, classroom management, and collaboration with multi-professional teams. Furthermore, providing ongoing support through mentoring, coaching, and professional learning communities is key to sustaining teacher effectiveness. Policies should be developed to ensure that teacher education programs prioritize inclusive practices and provide ongoing professional development opportunities. By fostering collaborative partnerships during School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) sessions, educators can share best practices and address the specific needs of students, particularly those with special education requirements. Future research should explore the impact of specialized training on teacher effectiveness and student outcomes, assessing how well-prepared teachers contribute to creating inclusive educational environments.

4.4. Building a Culture of Inclusive Excellence by Collaboration and Impactful Teaching

The narratives of IPED Teacher Rose highlight the essential role of collaboration and teacher commitment in fostering effective inclusive education. The success of inclusive education practices depends largely on a supportive environment where collaboration between teachers and professionals, coupled with a deep commitment to inclusive education, is prioritized. Teacher Rose's findings underscore the significance of collaboration, noting that it enhances knowledge exchange, resource accessibility, and the development of innovative teaching methods. Research by Pozas and Letzel-Alt (2023) supports this, revealing that teachers who collaborated with Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) or Resource Teachers (RTs) benefited from diverse perspectives and improved curriculum planning. Additionally, teachers with specialized training in inclusive education were more proficient in collaborative skills, particularly in planning and communicating with families. Gunnþórsdóttir et al. (2024) further emphasized the role of principals in creating a shared vision of inclusion and promoting ongoing collaboration among staff, a perspective also supported by Malmberg-Heimonen et al. (2023), who highlighted the importance of interprofessional teamwork in inclusive education.

In terms of teacher commitment, the narratives of Teacher Rose further reinforce the value of teacher dedication to student success. Altun (2017) argue that teachers' strong commitment, including extended work hours and professional development, positively impacts student outcomes and motivates community involvement. Hart (2024) also emphasize that teachers' commitment to inclusive education reflects their dedication to ensuring every student can reach their full potential. Mart (2013) adds that teacher commitment is foundational to school success, as it strengthens a sense of belonging and loyalty to the institution. Drawing from these insights, the researcher recommends that school leaders foster collaboration and teacher commitment through regular professional development, collaborative platforms, and incentive programs. Policies should support these efforts by creating structures that promote collaboration and provide resources for teacher growth. Future research should explore the impact of such collaboration on student outcomes, teacher satisfaction, and overall school culture.

The narratives shared by ALS Teacher Ted emphasize the profound value and impact of dedicated teaching, underscoring its role in not just transmitting knowledge but in empowering students and shaping the future. Dedicated teaching, as discussed by Teacher Ted, extends beyond academic instruction—it fosters meaningful connections, cultivates a supportive learning environment, and motivates students to reach their fullest potential. This theme stands out for its focus on the lasting impact of teachers' commitment and passion for their profession. Nurjanah et al. (2020) found that transformational leadership and organizational commitment, particularly through internalization, are essential in fostering teacher dedication, which, in turn, maximizes resource utilization and enhances student outcomes. Liu (2024) also highlighted that positive teacher-student relationships are key to boosting student engagement, with students showing greater participation and improved academic performance when these relationships are nurtured.

Additionally, Van Wingerden and Poell (2019) argue that the rapidly changing landscape of education, driven by digitalization and globalization, demands that teachers possess new skills such as problem-solving, technology proficiency, and effective communication. In this dynamic context, teacher commitment remains a critical motivator, as Altun (2017) noted, driving educators to invest time and energy into fostering student success. To further enhance the impact of dedicated teaching, it is recommended that educational institutions create environments that support and recognize dedicated educators. Policies should include resources for professional development, mentorship programs, and incentives for excellence in teaching. Future research should focus on exploring interventions that strengthen teacher commitment and examine its long-term effects on student achievement.

5. CONCLUSION

This narrative research study on inclusive education employed a bottom-up theoretical framework, focusing on the experiences of teachers and recognizing the importance of contextual nuances, co-constructing knowledge, and promoting diversity and intersectionality. By centering teachers' narratives, the study aimed to inform policy and practice, with grassroots data influencing top management decisions for potential policy revisions and practice improvements. This approach deepened the understanding of how teachers' insights can bring transformative effects on diverse learners in inclusive settings. It also paved the way for developing more effective strategies and interventions to foster inclusive educational environments that meet the needs of all individuals involved.

Several avenues for future research can further enrich this topic. These include exploring factors that influence personal commitment in SPED programs, the role of tailored instructional materials in enhancing student engagement, and investigating the impact of teacher preparation programs and professional development. Additionally, research may focus on the role of indigenous education, the effectiveness of inclusive education for student outcomes, and the impact of collaboration and teacher commitment on school culture and student success. Studies may also examine the long-term effects of teacher dedication on student achievement and explore practical strategies to strengthen teacher commitment and foster collaboration in inclusive education settings.

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