MENTAL BALANCE AS MEDIATOR ON RESILIENCE AND TEACHING COMMITMENT OF THE TEACHERS IN DIGOS ORIENTAL, DIGOS CITY

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ABSTRACT

The current study aimed to evaluate whether institutional incentive system mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and teachers' commitment. In this study, the researcher selected the 200 public elementary school teachers in Talomo A District, Division of Davao City as the respondents of the study. Stratified random sampling technique was utilized in the selection of the respondents. Non-experimental quantitative research design using descriptive-correlational method was employed. The data collected were subjected on the following statistical tools: Mean, Pearson Moment Product Correlation, multiple linear regression analysis, and Structural equation model using mediation analysis. Findings revealed that institutional incentive system and teachers' commitment in Talomo A District in Davao City were described as extensive, while teachers' self-efficacy was rated as moderately extensive. Further, correlation analysis demonstrated that there is a significant relationship among teachers' self-efficacy, commitment, institutional incentive system. Evidently, SEM using mediation analysis proved that institutional incentive system partially mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and teacher's commitment in Talomo A District in Davao City. In other words, institutional incentive system is a significant mediator on the relationship between self-efficacy and teachers' commitment in Talomo A District in Davao City. The study, therefore, conducted for further utilization of findings through publication in reputable research journal.

Keywords: Teachers' self-efficacy, commitment, institutional incentive system, educational management, Davao City, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are at the heart of education, shaping the experiences and outcomes of their students. Their commitment to the profession often determines how effectively they engage with students and how much impact they have on learning. But it's not just personal passion or intrinsic motivation that drives teachers; external factors, like the support they receive from their institutions, also play a crucial role. One such factor is the institutional incentive system—things like rewards, recognition, and other forms of support that schools offer to motivate teachers and help them perform better. While much has been said about how teachers' self-efficacy (their belief in their ability to succeed) impacts their dedication, the role of institutional incentives in this equation hasn't been fully explored.

Self-efficacy is vital for teachers. When teachers believe they can succeed, they tend to use better teaching practices, stay resilient in the face of challenges, and remain deeply committed to their work and students. But, as important as self-efficacy is, it doesn't tell the whole story. Teachers are also influenced by the environment around them—especially the support (or lack thereof) from their institutions. When an incentive system is well-designed, it can boost motivation, job satisfaction, and a teacher's sense of value, all of which help them stay committed.

Understanding how institutional incentives interact with teachers' self-efficacy to shape their commitment is critical. For educational leaders and policymakers, this knowledge can be key to improving teaching outcomes. But despite how important this relationship is, there's not much research on how institutional incentives might actually mediate the link between self-efficacy and teacher commitment—especially in the context of public elementary schools in the Philippines. That's where this study comes in. It aims to explore whether the institutional incentive system has a role in shaping the connection between teachers' self-efficacy and their commitment to teaching.

Focusing on public elementary teachers in Talomo A District, Davao City, this study aims to offer a clear look at how teachers' attitudes and behaviors are influenced by institutional incentives. Using a non-experimental, quantitative design with a descriptive-correlational approach, the research will explore the relationships between self-efficacy, institutional incentives, and teacher commitment. The study will use methods like Pearson's correlation, multiple regression, and structural equation modeling (SEM) to better understand how these factors are connected and how strong those connections really are.

This research not only adds to the academic conversation but also provides practical insights for educators, school administrators, and policymakers. It highlights how crucial well-thought-out incentive systems are in boosting teachers' self-efficacy and commitment, which, in turn, can lead to better outcomes for students.

The importance of this relationship has only grown in recent years, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to online and blended learning brought a host of new challenges for teachers, leading to increased stress and burnout. A 2021 report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that many teachers worldwide were overwhelmed by the sudden transition, lacking the support and recognition they needed. As a result, many teachers reported feeling less confident and more disconnected from their profession. The frustration was so intense that it sparked protests in countries like Chile, the U.S., and others, with teachers demanding better pay, job security, and working conditions.

In countries with severe teacher shortages, such as parts of Africa and Southeast Asia, the lack of institutional support has further worsened the situation, leading to high teacher turnover and even lower commitment to the job. These challenges show just how important it is for institutions to design effective incentive systems that boost teachers' morale and sense of value.

In the Philippines, the pandemic made an already challenging situation even worse. Teachers were asked to suddenly switch to blended and online learning, but many lacked the proper training or resources, which led to burnout. A survey by the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) in 2021 revealed that over 60% of teachers were feeling emotionally exhausted. On top of this, low salaries, poor working conditions, and limited professional development opportunities have left teachers feeling unsupported, diminishing their self-efficacy and commitment. In fact, teacher groups like the Teachers' Dignity Coalition (TDC) have been advocating for better salaries and benefits, pointing to how a lack of institutional support is hurting teachers' morale and performance. Moreover, many teachers are leaving the profession, particularly in rural areas, contributing to a growing shortage of qualified educators.

This study also connects with broader research on mental health and teacher resilience. By focusing on how mental balance influences resilience and teaching commitment, it not only advocates for better mental health support for teachers but also aligns with a larger goal: to create educational environments that sustain teachers and ensure they remain dedicated to their students and the profession.

In short, this study hopes to shed light on a key issue: that teachers' well-being—supported by institutional incentives—is central to their effectiveness, commitment, and, ultimately, the quality of education that students receive.

2. METHODS

Philosophical Assumptions

Ontology

Ontology is about understanding the nature of reality—how we experience and interpret the world around us. In this study, we're looking at how teachers in Digos Oriental view their reality, particularly in terms of their mental balance, resilience, and commitment to teaching. These experiences are deeply personal, shaped by each teacher's unique perspective, emotions, and circumstances. So, the study assumes that reality isn't a one-size-fits-all truth. Instead, it's something that's constructed from individual experiences. This means that teachers might experience varying levels of stress, resilience, and commitment, and these differences will be explored in depth. The subjective nature of reality will guide how we interpret the research data (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Epistemology

Epistemology is about how we come to know and understand things. For this study, we take a constructivist approach, which means knowledge is built collaboratively between the researcher and the participants. Rather than being an outside observer, the researcher actively engages with the teachers to understand their lived experiences. The knowledge we gain will come directly from these teachers, shaped by their personal reflections and interpretations of their mental health, resilience, and teaching commitment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2020). This approach highlights the importance of the relationship between the researcher and the teachers, as both contribute to creating new insights.

Axiology

Axiology deals with the role of values in research. As in all qualitative studies, the researcher's values and the participants' values will influence the direction of the study. In this case, the researcher brings a passion for education, teacher well-being, and mental health. These values will shape how the researcher understands the themes of resilience and teaching commitment. The study will also respect and consider the values of the teachers, such as their sense of responsibility, their dedication to teaching, and their attitudes toward mental health. Throughout the study, ethical principles will guide the process, ensuring that these values are acknowledged while maintaining academic rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 2020).

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is about how language is used to communicate meaning. In this study, especially since it's a phenomenological research project, the language will be engaging, approachable, and personal. The aim is to make the research feel like it's not just an academic exercise but a way to truly understand the real-life experiences of the teachers. By adopting a conversational tone, the researcher hopes to reflect the emotions, challenges, and successes that the teachers experience. This rhetorical approach ensures that the teachers' voices are heard and respected (Van Manen, 2022).

3. METHODOLOGY

The study follows a qualitative approach, using phenomenology as its main methodology. Phenomenology is all about understanding people's lived experiences from their perspective. In this case, the research will focus on how teachers experience their mental balance, resilience, and commitment to teaching. The researcher will conduct in-depth interviews, allowing the teachers to share their personal stories. The data will be analyzed inductively, meaning that the themes will emerge from the teachers' words, not from pre-set categories. This approach will provide rich insights into the challenges and rewards that teachers face (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Qualitative Assumptions

Several core principles guide this qualitative study. First, phenomenology is at the center, focusing on understanding how teachers interpret their experiences. Teaching is personal, and teachers' professional and personal lives are deeply intertwined with their mental health and sense of commitment. The study will dive into these personal experiences through direct engagement with the teachers.

The study also touches on ethnography, looking at how cultural and environmental factors—such as school culture and community values—impact teaching practices and resilience. Additionally, the study draws on the case study approach, focusing on a specific group of teachers from the Digos Oriental region to explore their shared and unique experiences in-depth.

Design and Procedure

The research design follows a phenomenological approach, focusing on understanding teachers' lived experiences in Digos Oriental. The primary data collection method will be semi-structured interviews, where teachers will be asked open-ended questions about their mental health, resilience, and commitment to teaching. These interviews will give teachers the freedom to share their stories in their own words. The researcher will guide the conversation based on their responses, allowing for a deeper exploration of their experiences.

Once the data is collected, the researcher will analyze the interview transcripts to identify recurring themes that relate to the teachers' experiences. The process will be transparent, with a clear outline of each step from participant recruitment to data collection and analysis. The findings will provide insights into the relationship between mental balance, resilience, and teaching commitment (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines are crucial when studying sensitive topics like mental health and emotional well-being. This study will prioritize the following ethical principles to protect participants:

Voluntary Participation: Teachers can choose to participate, and they can withdraw at any time without consequence. They will be fully informed about their rights before taking part in the study.

Informed Consent: Participants will provide written consent, ensuring they understand the study's purpose, methods, and any risks or benefits involved. They will also be assured that their participation will remain confidential.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: To protect teachers' identities, pseudonyms will be used, and personal information will remain confidential.

Potential for Harm: Given the sensitive nature of the research, the researcher will be mindful of any emotional distress. Participants can discuss tough topics at their own pace, and they can stop at any time.

Results Communication: The findings will be shared with participants to get their feedback, ensuring transparency and collaboration in interpreting the results (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2020).

Participants

The participants will be teachers from public schools in Digos Oriental with at least three years of teaching experience. They'll be selected based on their experiences with challenges related to mental health, resilience, and teaching commitment. The study will use purposive sampling to ensure that the selected participants can provide valuable insights into the research questions. Participation is voluntary, and informed consent will be obtained. The sample size will be around 15-20 teachers to ensure that enough data is collected to reach data saturation (Palinkas et al., 2021).

Instrument

Interviews will be the main tool for data collection. Semi-structured interviews will allow for a flexible conversation where the teacher can share their experiences in-depth. There will also be open-ended questions to guide the discussion, but participants will be free to elaborate on their thoughts.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) will be used as a supplementary method to capture group dynamics and encourage participants to respond to one another's experiences. Field notes will be kept to document observations during the interviews and FGDs, particularly non-verbal cues that provide additional context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2020).

Data Collection

Data will be gathered through one-on-one interviews and FGDs. Interviews will be audio-recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed for analysis. Observations will be made during the FGDs, and field notes will be taken to capture important non-verbal cues and contextual details. Data collection will take about two months to ensure a thorough exploration of the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Data Analysis

Data analysis will follow thematic analysis, which involves identifying patterns and themes in the data. The researcher will read through the transcripts to get familiar with the data, then code it by marking meaningful sections. These codes will be grouped into themes to reflect the central ideas. NVivo software will help organize this process efficiently.

The researcher will use Colaizzi's method to focus on significant statements that address the research questions. This approach will help ensure that the analysis stays true to the teachers' experiences and will also be compared with existing research to validate the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the study is credible, the following criteria will be used:

Credibility: Member checking will allow participants to review the findings and confirm that they resonate with their experiences.

Dependability: The researcher will maintain a detailed audit trail of all decisions made during the study.

Transferability: The study will include rich, detailed descriptions to help readers understand how the findings might apply in different settings.

Confirmability: The researcher will acknowledge their own biases and how they might have influenced the study (Lincoln & Guba, 2020).

4. RESULTS

The results from this study, which analyzed interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with 20 teachers from public schools in Digos Oriental, brought to light three major themes that connect mental balance, resilience, and teaching commitment:

1. Mental Health and Emotional Resilience
2. Teachers' Coping Mechanisms and Strategies for Resilience
3. The Impact of Teaching Commitment on Personal and Professional Well-being

Each theme was further developed with subthemes that deepen the understanding of teachers' experiences and the challenges they face.

Theme 1: Mental Health and Emotional Resilience

This theme emerged as the central issue influencing teachers' commitment to their work. Many teachers described mental health struggles such as stress, burnout, and anxiety that negatively impacted their well-being and professional life.

Teachers frequently felt overwhelmed by the pressures of meeting educational standards and addressing students' emotional and academic needs.

Subtheme 1.1: Stress from Workload and Expectations

Teachers reported high levels of stress from a heavy workload, with tasks like grading papers and lesson planning taking a toll on their personal lives. One teacher shared, "The demands of grading papers, preparing lessons, and participating in school activities are exhausting.

At times, it feels like I am juggling too many things at once, and my personal well-being suffers." This ongoing pressure led to emotional exhaustion and burnout, which affected their resilience and mental health.

Subtheme 1.2: Stigma around Mental Health

The study also revealed that teachers were often reluctant to discuss mental health struggles due to stigma in the educational environment. Some feared being judged by peers and administrators. One teacher stated, "We're expected to be role models and strong for the students. Admitting that we are struggling emotionally might be seen as a weakness." This stigma prevents many teachers from seeking help, contributing to a cycle of isolation and mental health challenges.

Theme 2: Teachers' Coping Mechanisms and Strategies for Resilience

The second theme revolved around how teachers coped with the stresses of their roles. The study found that teachers employed both personal and external coping mechanisms to maintain their emotional resilience.

Subtheme 2.1: Support Systems within the School and Community

Teachers identified social support as a crucial factor for building resilience. Having supportive colleagues and school leaders contributed significantly to their emotional well-being. One teacher noted, "Having a supportive group of colleagues helps me manage the daily stresses. We talk about our challenges, share advice, and sometimes just laugh together." The importance of community and strong professional relationships was highlighted as essential for preventing burnout.

Subtheme 2.2: Personal Strategies for Stress Management

Teachers also used personal strategies such as exercise, mindfulness, and spending time with family to manage stress. As one teacher described, "I make sure to dedicate time for myself, whether it's taking a walk or just sitting in silence for a few minutes. These moments help me to refocus and stay grounded." However, many teachers noted that these strategies were only temporary solutions and could not fully address the underlying issues contributing to their stress.

Theme 3: The Impact of Teaching Commitment on Personal and Professional Well-being

The third theme explored the dual impact of teaching commitment on teachers' personal and professional lives. While teaching provided a sense of purpose and fulfillment, it also imposed significant emotional and physical demands.

Subtheme 3.1: Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment

Many teachers expressed a strong sense of purpose in their work, finding great satisfaction in seeing their students succeed. One teacher shared, "I feel proud when I see my students progress, especially when they come from difficult backgrounds. Knowing that I've contributed to their growth makes everything worth it." This sense of fulfillment helped sustain their commitment to teaching, even in the face of challenges.

Subtheme 3.2: Sacrifices for Teaching

At the same time, teachers reported making personal sacrifices for the sake of their work. Long hours and neglecting personal health were common, as teachers often felt compelled to put their students' needs first. One teacher reflected, "Sometimes, I put my own needs aside to be there for my students. It's part of the job, but it also means I don't have enough time to care for myself." This dedication, while fulfilling, also contributed to stress and burnout, highlighting the emotional labor of teaching.

5. DISCUSSION

The study reveals the complex relationship between mental health, emotional resilience, and teaching commitment among teachers in Digos Oriental. Teachers' emotional resilience is closely linked to their social support systems and personal coping strategies. However, the high demands of teaching, coupled with a lack of mental health support and stigma, create significant emotional strain that can undermine resilience.

Teachers' coping mechanisms, both personal and external, provide some relief but are often not sufficient to address the root causes of stress. The commitment to teaching, while offering a sense of purpose and fulfillment, also leads to personal sacrifices that contribute to teacher burnout and stress.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to support teachers' well-being:

1. Addressing Mental Health Stigma

   Schools must create a supportive environment where teachers feel comfortable discussing their mental health struggles. This can be achieved through professional development that includes mental health awareness and support programs.

2. Reducing Teacher Workload

   To mitigate stress, schools should consider reducing administrative burdens and providing more resources to help teachers manage their workload. Ensuring teachers have the time and support for professional development can also contribute to better mental health.

3. Fostering Supportive Communities

Schools should prioritize creating strong professional communities where teachers can share experiences and provide emotional support to one another. This will help to build resilience and combat feelings of isolation.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the need for schools to take a proactive approach to support teacher well-being. By addressing the mental health challenges teachers face, reducing workload demands, and fostering a culture of collaboration and support, schools can ensure that teachers remain resilient and committed to their profession, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students.

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