



Teachers' Discernment: A Journey of Teacher Exploitation

Ivy Joy Encarnacion Amigos¹, Amra M. Usop², Ramlah Ampatuan Duge³

¹Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology (CFCST), Arakan, Cotabato, Philippines vjoy.xhian12@gmail.com

²Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology (CFCST), Arakan, Cotabato, Philippines amrausop1970@gmail.com

³Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology (CFCST), Arakan, Cotabato, Philippines ramlah@cfcst.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

This study explored teachers' perceptions of exploitation and their lived experiences in public schools, specifically within the 2nd Congressional District of Cotabato Province, which includes the municipalities of Antipas, Arakan, Magpet, Makilala, and President Roxas. Using a mixed-method research design, the study involved 330 teachers who responded to a survey questionnaire, along with 10 teachers participating in in-depth and focus group interviews. The results revealed that teachers felt a low level of exploitation across all four indicators: workload, job control, distributive fairness, and procedural fairness. Correlation analysis showed a significant relationship between job control and length of service regarding perceived exploitation. Regression analysis indicated that length of service significantly predicted job control. The qualitative findings highlighted that teachers' perceptions of exploitation stemmed mainly from unequal treatment and power imbalances.

Additionally, systemic educational inequities, cultural and social biases, and insufficient professional support were identified as major contributing factors. The study emphasized the importance of inclusive educational policies and comprehensive teacher support systems to mitigate and prevent exploitation.

1. Introduction

As an educator, I confront exploitation through excessive workloads, inadequate compensation, and a lack of recognition. These challenges not only affect my well-being but also undermine the quality of education. The demands placed on teachers exceed reasonable limits, jeopardizing personal and professional fulfillment. The undervaluation of our contributions is detrimental to the education system. Urgent attention is required to address these issues and ensure fair treatment for teachers, fostering continued dedication to the noble profession of education.

Although research on teacher exploitation is expanding, there is still a lack of studies that focus specifically on the cognitive processes teachers use to navigate such situations. These include evaluating power imbalances, judging the fairness of their treatment, and making thoughtful choices to protect their professional well-being (Smith & Jones, 2020). This gap highlights the importance of thoroughly exploring how educators think and reason in order to make informed decisions when facing exploitation (Johnson, 2019).

Teacher exploitation is a pervasive issue worldwide, with numerous studies highlighting the detrimental effects on educators' well-being and to the quality of education. The data provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020), approximately 60% of teachers in many countries face low pay, 70% experience excessive workloads, and 50% report inadequate support, reflecting the global nature of this problem. In the Philippines, teacher exploitation remains a pressing concern. Recent data from the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT, 2022) indicate that 65% of Filipino teachers grapple with low salaries, 75% face heavy workloads, and 55% lack resources and professional development opportunities. The Philippines' unique context, characterized by a diverse educational system and specific policy challenges, necessitates a localized examination of teacher exploitation.

Based on many research, teacher exploitation within public schools has several key determinants. For instance, inadequate compensation is underscored as a significant factor by Johnson (2019) and Anderson and Martinez (2022), while research by Brown et al. (2022) and Garcia and Ramirez (2018) highlights the impact of heavy workloads and limited professional support. Research conducted by Smith and White (2017) and Davis (2022) has examined how leadership styles and organizational culture contribute to teacher exploitation. Their work provides important insights into the complex factors that drive this issue, highlighting the importance of a deeper, more holistic understanding.

However, within the broader investigation of teacher exploitation in public schools, there remains a significant gap in exploring its long-term effects—particularly how it impacts teacher retention and, in turn, student outcomes. Although current studies have effectively outlined the various aspects and immediate impacts of teacher exploitation, they often overlook its lasting consequences. Yet, recognizing that teacher exploitation can significantly contribute to higher teacher turnover rates, it becomes evident that such turnover has the potential to disrupt educational continuity in the classroom, ultimately affecting student learning outcomes (Hanuth researcher k & Rivkin, 2022).

As such, examining the complex nature of teacher exploitation and its impact on student outcomes underscores the importance of this qualitative study. The aim is to generate meaningful insights that can guide the creation of more effective policies and interventions within the public education system.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study aims to assess teachers' perceptions of the exploitation that they encounter within their profession. More specifically, this sought to answer the following questions:

Study 1. Level and relationship of socio-demographic profile on perceptions of the exploitation among teachers.

1. What is the socio-demographic profile of teachers in terms of age, sex, position; and length of service?
2. What is the level of perceived exploitation among teachers in terms of workload, job control, distributive fairness; and procedural fairness?
3. Is there a significant relationship between socio-demographic profile and the perceived exploitation among teachers?
4. Is there a significant influence of socio-demographic profile on the level of perceived exploitation among teachers?

Study 2. Lived experiences of teachers about exploitation in teaching.

1. To explore teachers' perceptions and experiences about exploitation;
2. To identify the multifaceted factors contributing to exploitation in teaching; and
3. To inform policy recommendations and interventions to mitigate and prevent exploitation in teaching.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two key theories. The first is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943), which proposes that individuals have a hierarchical structure of needs that must be fulfilled, starting with basic physiological needs (e.g., food, shelter) and advancing to higher-level needs such as self-esteem and self-actualization. In the context of teacher exploitation, factors such as inadequate compensation, excessive workload, and lack of professional support can obstruct teachers' ability to satisfy their fundamental physiological and psychological needs. By exploring teachers' perceptions of exploitation, this study aims to assess how these exploitative conditions affect their well-being and job satisfaction, providing insights into how well teachers' basic needs are met within the public school system.

The second theory is Organizational Justice Theory (Greenberg, 1987), which posits that employees' perceptions of fairness within an organization significantly influence their attitudes and behaviors. In the context of teacher exploitation, this theory can help explain how teachers' perceptions of fairness—or the lack thereof—regarding workload, compensation, and support impact their job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment to their profession. By examining these perceptions through the lens of organizational justice, this study seeks to clarify the relationship between perceived exploitation and its effects on teachers' professional experiences within the public school system.

2. Methods

This chapter outlines the research design, study locale, participants and sampling methods, the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, data collection procedures, research flow, data analysis techniques, and the trustworthiness of the study.

2.1 Research Design

In the first phase of the study, a **descriptive correlational research design** was employed. This phase aimed to examine the demographic profile of teachers, assess their perceptions of exploitation in relation to workload, job control, distributive fairness, and procedural fairness, and explore the significant relationships and influences of socio-demographic factors on teachers' perceived levels of exploitation.

In the second phase, a **phenomenological research design** was used to explore the personal experiences and perspectives of educators facing exploitation within the public school system. The phenomenological approach proved valuable in uncovering the complex challenges teachers encounter, providing insights that could inform comprehensive solutions to promote a more equitable and supportive educational environment.

2.2. Research Respondents

In the first part of the study, a total of 341 teachers were invited to participate by completing a survey questionnaire. These teachers were selected from five schools within the 2nd Congressional District of Cotabato. A stratified sampling method was used to ensure equal representation from each of the selected schools.

For the second part of the study, ten participants were chosen for research interviews, consisting of five individuals for in-depth interviews and five others for focus group discussions (FGDs).

According to Creswell and Poth (2017), a sample size of 10 participants was considered sufficient to allow for thorough exploration and saturation of the study.

2.3. Research Procedure

For the first part of the study, the researcher used Raosoft's Formula and stratified random sampling to select respondents. Raosoft's Formula was employed to determine the total number of secondary teacher respondents within the 2nd Congressional District of Cotabato. Following this, stratified random sampling was applied, with each municipality within the district serving as a separate stratum. This ensured that the required number of respondents was equally distributed across the various municipalities. Using the Raosoft Calculator with a margin of error (e) set at 0.05, a minimum sample size of 330 teachers was determined to be necessary.

Below is the table showing the allocation of the 330 teacher respondents needed in each Municipality.

Table 1. Data of the Teacher Respondents of the Study

Congressional District 2	Total no. of Secondary School Teachers	Frequency of Sample	Percentage of the Sample
Antipas	437	63	19.04
Arakan	426	61	18.56
Magpet	479	69	20.87
Makilala	412	59	17.95
President Roxas	541	78	23.57
Total	2295	330	100.00

Meanwhile, in selecting the participants for the second part of the study, the researcher utilized purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, as explained by Creswell (2017), was a non-probability sampling technique widely used in qualitative research. It involved the intentional selection of participants or elements for a study based on specific criteria or characteristics, ensuring that they possessed information or experiences relevant to the research focus. Specifically, the researcher identified 10 teachers who were currently working at the Department of Education and who had felt and observed exploitation within the workplace.

2.4. Research Instrument

The first part of the study utilized three questionnaires to assess the socio-demographic profile, level of perceived exploitation, and qualitative aspects of the study. The first questionnaire was designed to collect demographic data from the teachers, including age, sex, position, and length of service. The second questionnaire was aimed at assessing the teachers' perceived levels of exploitation.

The researcher used an adopted and modified questionnaire from Boer, Bakker, Syroit, and Schaufeli (2002). This questionnaire consisted of four indicators to measure the perceived exploitation of teachers: workload with $\alpha = 0.765$, low job control with $\alpha = 0.841$, distributive fairness with $\alpha = 0.721$, and procedural fairness with $\alpha = 0.779$. Overall, the questionnaire had a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.777$. This survey questionnaire had a 32-item scale, which was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 - Strongly Agree, 4 - Agree, 3 - Neutral, 2 - Disagree, and 1 - Strongly Disagree.

The indicators of the study were rated using 5-level Likert Scaling system as follows:

Level	Range	Description	Descriptive Equivalent
5	4.21 - 5.00	Very High	The respondents highly exhibit a type of behavior
4	3.41 - 4.20	High	The respondents exhibit a type of behavior
3	2.61 - 3.40	Moderate	The respondents somewhat exhibit a type of behavior
2	1.81 - 2.60	Low	The respondents do not exhibit a type of behavior
1	1.00 - 1.80	Very Low	The respondents strongly do not exhibit a type of behavior

For the second part of the study, the researcher formulated an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions to explore teachers' perceptions and experiences of exploitation in depth. These questions were designed to elicit detailed narratives and insights regarding various aspects such as workload, job control, distributive fairness, and procedural fairness. The interview guide was designed to capture the nuances of teachers' experiences and perspectives, offering rich qualitative data that would complement the quantitative findings from the questionnaire.

2.5. Data Gathering Procedure

For the first part of the study, the researcher followed a systematic process to obtain necessary approvals before engaging with targeted respondents. Initially, approval was sought from the academic adviser, followed by the Dean and the Research Committee at Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology. After securing institutional approval, the researcher obtained permissions from relevant supervisors and school principals to access the targeted teachers within the five schools in the 2nd congressional district of Cotabato. Finally, the researcher sought consent from individual respondents, ensuring ethical considerations were upheld before distributing the survey questionnaires.

After completing the first part of the study, the researcher conducted interviews with 10 identified participants, using an audio recorder to capture their responses. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, the interview process, and their rights, including confidentiality and voluntary participation. Informed consent for recording was obtained, and ethical considerations were ensured. The recorded responses were transcribed and anonymized for analysis, providing qualitative insights to supplement the initial data gathered.

2.6. Data Analysis

For the first part of the study, frequency counts were used to establish the socio-demographic characteristics of the teachers involved. This method allowed the researcher to collect and analyze numerical data to determine various demographic factors, such as age, sex, position, and length of service. Next, statistical measures like mean and standard deviation were employed to analyze the levels of perceived exploitation among teachers concerning workload, job control, distributive fairness, and procedural fairness. Additionally, Pearson correlation and simple regression analysis were used to explore the significant relationship between teachers' demographic profiles and perceived exploitation, as well as to identify predictors of teachers' perceptions of exploitation.

For the second part of the study, thematic analysis was used to identify, examine, and interpret patterns or themes within the qualitative data. As noted by Nowell et al. (2017), thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that systematically organizes and interprets patterns within qualitative data.

This approach helped the researcher uncover rich and nuanced insights from participants' narratives and experiences. It played a central role in the qualitative aspect of the study by providing a structured framework for data interpretation, ensuring rigor, and facilitating the generation of **valuable findings**.

4. Results

This chapter presents the collected data in tabular format, along with their respective discussions and interpretations. The first section outlines the frequencies of the respondents' socio-demographic profiles. The second section discusses the level of perceived exploitation among teachers. The third section examines the significant differences between the socio-demographic profile and the level of perceived exploitation. Finally, the chapter concludes with the qualitative aspect of the study.

The following are the findings of this study:

1. The demographic profile of the respondents showed that most teachers are aged 30-49, with more females than males, most hold the position of Teacher 3, and have 7 to 10 years of teaching experience.
2. On the level of perceived exploitation, it showed that teachers feel empowered rather than exploited, as all factors, including workload, job control, distributive fairness, and procedural fairness, have high mean values.
3. Regarding the relationship between the demographic profile of teachers and perceived exploitation, the results show a significant positive correlation between job control and length of service, suggesting that teachers with more years of experience tend to feel they have greater control over their work. However, no significant correlations were found between the other demographic variables.
4. and the factors of workload, distributive unfairness, or procedural unfairness.
5. Meanwhile, in terms of the influence of the demographic profile on teachers' perceived exploitation, only length of service significantly predicted job control, suggesting that more experienced teachers feel they have greater control over their work.

5. Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. It is recommended to address systemic educational inequities and cultural biases that contribute to exploitation by promoting policies that ensure fairness, equal treatment, and support for professional development.
2. Developing professional development programs that empower teachers, particularly those with fewer years of experience, to gain better control over their work and reduce perceived exploitation is recommended.

-
3. Teachers should be encouraged to share their experiences of exploitation and collaborate to identify and implement strategies for improving fairness and reducing power imbalances.
 4. Future research should explore the impact of specific demographic factors, such as gender and teaching position, on perceived exploitation, and expand the study to include a broader range of educational settings for a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.