

Exploring Educational Barriers: Dealing with Scarcity of Learning Materials

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Abstract: This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences and coping mechanisms of elementary teachers teaching with limited learning materials in Sta. Maria, Davao Occidental. Using purposive sampling, I selected ten teachers who participated in semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Findings revealed four key themes regarding teachers' lived experiences: Resourcefulness and Adaptability (improvisation, flexibility, adaptation to student needs), Emotional and Social Impact (student motivation, relationship-building, stress management), Professional Growth and Development (continuous learning, peer support, professional identity), and Community and Parental Engagement (community involvement, parental support). Coping mechanisms included themes of Resource Optimization (local resource utilization, repurposing materials, digital resource sharing), Collaborative Efforts (teamwork, parent and community engagement, partnerships), and Community Integration (leveraging relationships, engaging parents). Educational management insights highlighted Resource Allocation and Management, Innovation in Teaching, and Community and Stakeholder Engagement as critical areas for improving educational practice. Recommendations emphasize targeted resource allocation, professional development, community partnerships, technological integration, and further research to enhance rural education quality.

Keywords: *Lived Experiences, Coping Mechanisms, Limited Learning Materials, Resourcefulness, Community Engagement, Educational Management, Rural Education.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The lack of educational resources in the Philippines, especially in primary schools, negatively affects students' learning potential. It focuses on teachers' experiences with this issue, emphasizing that the shortage of learning materials limits students' opportunities to expand their vocabulary, knowledge, and skills. As a result, learners may not reach their full potential. The study also incorporates global, national, and local literature to better understand the problem.

The lack of educational resources across global, national, and local contexts greatly hinders students' ability to learn and thrive. In underprivileged communities, students often struggle with limited access to textbooks, learning materials, and qualified teachers, which significantly affects their academic performance and growth. Families are frequently forced to shoulder the financial burden of purchasing educational tools, further deepening inequality. Schools also suffer from inadequate infrastructure, including lack of electricity, clean water, and internet connectivity, making effective teaching and learning difficult. Overcrowded classrooms, outdated teaching methods, and insufficient materials contribute to poor comprehension and declining student outcomes. These conditions not only obstruct individual learners from reaching their potential but

also undermine the overall quality of education within affected communities.

The research aimed to explore how the lack of educational resources affected teaching quality in Philippine public elementary schools. It sought to understand the root causes of these shortages, their impact on teachers and student learning, and to identify effective interventions. By examining teachers' experiences and evaluating possible solutions, the study aspired to enhance access to quality education and improve students' overall learning outcomes.

The literature emphasized the distinct challenges faced by teachers in rural areas with limited learning materials, highlighting how resource scarcity affected teaching methods and student engagement. Despite these difficulties, teachers demonstrated resilience by improvising materials, adapting strategies, and forming support networks. They often used digital tools and involved the community to maintain educational quality. However, there was a noted lack of in-depth qualitative studies that explored how these coping mechanisms were developed and sustained. Additionally, educational management played a vital role in alleviating resource-related issues, with effective leadership and targeted training helping teachers navigate constraints. The literature called for policy reforms that addressed rural-urban

disparities and advocated for qualitative research to better understand teachers' lived experiences and guide future interventions.

Three foundational theories supported the study's framework. Vygotsky's Social Development Theory underscored the importance of social interaction in learning, offering insights into how rural teachers relied on community and peer collaboration to overcome resource limitations. Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed emphasized education as a tool for critical thinking and transformation, aligning with how teachers in resource-poor settings used dialogic and problem-solving approaches to engage students. Bandura's Social Learning Theory explained how teachers learned by observing and imitating others, and highlighted the role of self-efficacy in shaping their teaching practices and coping mechanisms despite limited materials.

II. METHOD

The researcher employed a qualitative research design to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems. This approach enabled an in-depth examination of complex themes and allowed the collection of rich, descriptive data essential for understanding the lived experiences of teachers. The flexibility of the qualitative design was well-suited to explore the subjective meanings of teachers' experiences, facilitating detailed interactions that captured the nuances of teaching in resource-limited settings. To further focus on these lived experiences, the researcher adopted a phenomenological approach, which emphasized understanding individuals' personal perceptions and narratives. This method allowed for a deep exploration of the challenges and adaptations teachers encountered in rural areas, shedding light on their coping mechanisms and innovative strategies.

The researcher grounded the study in phenomenology, viewing the teachers' experiences as subjective and unique, highlighting their personal realities (ontology). Knowledge was constructed through empathetic engagement with participants, ensuring their perspectives were authentically represented without researcher bias (epistemology). The researcher acknowledged personal values and actively bracketed preconceptions to maintain the study's integrity (axiology). Finally, language was carefully chosen to capture the emotional depth and nuances of the teachers' stories, presenting their experiences vividly and engagingly (rhetoric).

The researcher embraced the qualitative assumption of subjective interpretivism to understand how individual teachers in rural areas perceive and interpret their unique experiences with limited learning materials. Recognizing that each teacher's narrative reflects their personal truth, the researcher used phenomenological methods to capture rich, detailed descriptions and ensure the teachers' voices were authentically represented. Through a reflective and empathetic engagement with the data, the researcher iteratively analyzed and validated findings with participants to maintain alignment with their intended meanings.

The researcher selected ten kindergarten teachers from Sta. Maria, Davao Occidental, dividing them evenly between in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to capture both individual experiences and group dynamics related to teaching with limited resources. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants who were knowledgeable and experienced in this context, ensuring a diverse range of insights from different schools and varying lengths of service. Inclusion criteria required teachers to have at least one year of experience, be currently employed in public schools in the area, have expressed concerns about resource limitations, and willingly consent to participate. This approach aimed to gather comprehensive and relevant data on the challenges faced by these educators.

The researcher secured ethical approvals and permission from educational authorities before selecting teachers from Sta. Maria using purposive sampling. Interviews were conducted with informed consent, recorded, and carefully transcribed. The data underwent thematic analysis to identify key experiences and coping strategies of teachers with limited resources. Findings were then interpreted to provide recommendations for better support and resources in rural education.

The researcher conducted a thorough thematic content analysis by first bracketing personal experiences to focus solely on participants' perspectives. Noteworthy statements from interviews were identified and grouped into meaningful themes that captured the essence of the teachers' experiences. A detailed textual description explained what the participants encountered, while a structural description explored the context and conditions surrounding those experiences. Environmental triangulation was applied to account for varying settings and factors that might influence the data's consistency. Finally, the researcher integrated these descriptions into a comprehensive summary, providing a rich and contextualized understanding of the phenomena studied.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first section illustrates the lived experiences of teachers working with learners who have limited learning materials. From these experiences, five main themes emerged: Resourcefulness and Adaptability, Emotional and Social Impact, Professional Growth and Development, and Community and Parental Engagement.

The second section highlighted the coping strategies teachers use to address the challenges of teaching with limited learning materials. The identified themes include Resource Optimization, Collaborative Efforts, and Community Integration.

The third section presented the key educational management insights derived from the experiences and challenges faced by teachers working with limited learning materials. The main themes identified are Resource Allocation and Management, Innovation in Teaching, and Community and Stakeholder Engagement.

The study on the lived experiences of teachers in Sta. Maria, Davao Occidental, revealed four key themes. Teachers demonstrated resourcefulness and adaptability by improvising materials and tailoring lessons to students' needs. They also experienced emotional and social impacts, focusing on motivating students, building strong relationships, and managing stress. Additionally, teachers showed commitment to professional growth through continuous learning and peer support. Community and parental engagement emerged as a vital factor in supporting students' education.

In coping with limited learning materials, teachers employed three main strategies. Resource optimization involved creatively using local and digital materials. Collaborative efforts highlighted teamwork among teachers and active involvement of parents and community members to address challenges. Community integration emphasized leveraging relationships with stakeholders to build a stronger support network for learners.

Educational management insights from these experiences pointed to three important themes. Effective resource allocation and management were crucial, focusing on maximizing available resources and generating new ones. Innovation in teaching involved adopting technology and creative methods to enhance learning. Lastly, community and stakeholder engagement played a significant role in fostering partnerships that improve educational outcomes despite resource constraints.

Reflecting on the study's findings about teachers adapting Flexible Learning Methods, the researcher recognized the importance of resourcefulness, adaptability, and emotional support in enhancing teaching effectiveness despite limited materials. Prioritizing student motivation, maintaining strong relationships, and managing stress are essential for a positive learning environment. The researcher encouraged to continue professional growth, collaborate with colleagues, and actively engage parents and the community to build stronger partnerships that support student success. By creatively optimizing resources, fostering teamwork, and leveraging community ties, The researcher can overcome challenges and create a resilient, supportive educational environment.

The researcher recommended that the Department of Education provide more resources and targeted funding to rural schools, support professional development, and foster partnerships to address resource shortages. School heads were urged to promote collaboration, ongoing training, community engagement, and recognize teachers' efforts. Teachers were encouraged to share strategies, pursue growth, involve parents, use simple technology, and build support networks. Learners were advised to take responsibility, engage with local resources, and maintain positive relationships. Future research should explore the long-term impact of adaptive teaching, community engagement, student perspectives, and educational technology in resource-limited schools.

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