



THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS HANDLING MULTIPLE ROLES

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of teachers handling multiple roles in Maa District, Davao City using a qualitative phenomenological design. Twelve public school teachers who had three or more years of teaching experience and were handling three or more school roles were selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through seven in-depth interviews and five focus group discussion informants using a validated semi-structured interview guide, and the responses were analyzed through Colaizzi's method and thematic content analysis. Results revealed that teachers experienced role balancing, professional growth, workload strain, workplace support, and expanded teacher roles as they handled instructional, administrative, and community-related responsibilities. Their coping mechanisms included adaptive professional identity, sustainable workload management, and integrated role balancing practices. The insights drawn from their experiences emphasized time mastery, adaptive growth, and self-care boundaries. The study was anchored on Role Theory by Biddle (1986), Stress and Coping Theory by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), and the Job Demands-Resources Model by Demerouti et al. (2001). The findings suggest the need for clearer role expectations, stronger workload support systems, and school-based practices that protect teacher well-being while sustaining professional commitment.

KEYWORDS: *phenomenological study; multiple roles; teacher experiences; coping mechanisms; workload management; teacher well-being*

INTRODUCTION

As a teacher observing school realities, I have seen that teaching is no longer limited to preparing lessons and facilitating classroom learning. Teachers are also expected to serve as advisers, coordinators, coaches, committee members, records managers, event organizers, community partners, and sources of emotional support for learners. These overlapping duties can strengthen professional growth, yet they can also create pressure when teachers must divide their time between instruction and non-instructional work. In Maa District, this concern becomes meaningful because many teachers continue to fulfill several roles while still trying to protect the quality of classroom teaching. Thus, exploring their lived experiences is important in understanding how they manage multiple expectations and sustain their commitment to learners.

Recent policy directions in the Department of Education also highlight the need to understand teachers' workload and role expectations. DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024 emphasized the immediate removal of administrative tasks from public school teachers so they can focus on classroom instruction. Along with DO 005, s. 2024, this policy direction shows that excessive ancillary work has become a serious concern in the public school system. Although these policies aim to return teachers' attention to teaching, the actual experiences of teachers who continue to handle multiple school roles still need to be explored. Their stories can show how policy reforms are felt in the daily realities of teachers.

In international contexts, teachers' multiple roles have been linked with emotional stress, fatigue, and burnout. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) noted that teachers who continuously manage instructional and administrative responsibilities may experience lower motivation and higher exhaustion. Kyriacou (2022) also emphasized that growing administrative work and continuous reforms contribute to teacher stress and reduced job satisfaction. Similarly, Klassen and Chiu (2019) explained that role expectations may weaken teachers' self-efficacy when support and recognition are inadequate. These studies suggest that multiple role performance is not only a workload issue but also a well-being and professional identity concern.

In other global settings, workload pressure has also been associated with reduced teacher effectiveness and declining mental health. McCarthy et al. (2021) reported that excessive work demands and insufficient time for rest are linked with burnout symptoms among teachers. Herman et al. (2020) further emphasized that teachers facing role overload need strong coping resources to maintain effectiveness. Across Asian contexts, Jeon and Kim (2023) found that multiple role expectations can affect work-life balance and emotional well-being. These findings reveal that the burden of multiple roles is a shared educational concern that affects teacher motivation, instructional presence, and long-term professional sustainability.

In the Philippines, the issue is equally evident because public school teachers often perform tasks beyond classroom instruction. Dayagbil et al. (2022) explained that Filipino teachers frequently experience work-life imbalance because of administrative work, meetings, record-keeping, and community-related duties. Eusebio and Tus (2023) likewise found that overlapping responsibilities contribute to emotional exhaustion and declining motivation among Filipino teachers. Piedad and Balondo (2021) added that new learning delivery



modes required teachers to act as facilitators, technical support providers, and counselors at the same time. These conditions show that Filipino teachers often carry wide-ranging responsibilities that influence both their professional performance and personal well-being.

In Mindanao and Davao-based school contexts, teachers' multiple roles are shaped by large workloads, limited personnel, and strong expectations from the school community. Almerino et al. (2022) described how role spillover occurs when professional responsibilities extend into personal time, thereby affecting family life and rest. De Guzman and Tan (2020) reported that teachers cope through social support, spiritual practices, humor, and peer relationships. Manalo (2022) also emphasized that Filipino values such as *pakikipagkapwa* and *bayanihan* help teachers sustain their sense of purpose despite professional strain. These perspectives show that teachers remain resilient, but their resilience should be supported by clearer structures and humane workload practices.

In Maa District, the challenge becomes more specific because teachers handle multiple functions while still being expected to deliver quality instruction. They may teach full classes, prepare lessons, complete reports, mentor learners, coordinate programs, supervise activities, and respond to community expectations within the same workweek. This situation may create role conflict when teaching duties compete with administrative or school-related tasks. It may also cause workload strain when teachers feel pulled in many directions with limited time and energy. Hence, there is a need to listen to teachers' direct narratives to understand how these roles are experienced, managed, and interpreted.

Although many studies have examined teacher burnout, workload, and resilience, fewer studies have focused on the actual lived experiences of teachers who perform multiple roles in Maa District. Existing literature often presents workload as a general issue, but it does not fully capture how teachers make meaning of their overlapping roles in a specific local setting. There is also a need to examine not only the challenges but also the coping mechanisms and insights that emerge from these experiences. This gap is important because support programs must be based on teachers' real classroom and school realities. Addressing this gap may help school leaders design more responsive teacher support systems.

The urgency of the study lies in the continued need to protect teacher well-being while sustaining quality education. If teachers remain overburdened, their instructional preparation, emotional presence, and long-term commitment may be affected. However, when their stories are understood, schools can identify practices that promote balance, collaboration, and manageable role distribution. The findings may also help administrators improve workload planning and clarify role expectations. Thus, this study provides meaningful evidence for strengthening teacher support, motivation, and sustainable performance in Maa District.

This study was anchored on Role Theory by Biddle (1986), which explains that individuals perform different social roles that carry expectations, duties, and norms. This theory fits the study because teachers in Maa District handle several overlapping roles such as adviser, coordinator, coach, committee member, and community partner. The study was also supported by Stress and Coping Theory by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which explains how individuals appraise stressful situations and use problem-focused or emotion-focused coping strategies. In addition, the Job Demands-Resources Model by Demerouti et al. (2001) explains how high job demands may lead to burnout when not balanced by resources such as support, autonomy, and effective leadership. Together, these theories guide the exploration of how teachers experience, cope with, and draw insights from handling multiple roles.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of teachers handling multiple roles in Maa District, Davao City. I used a phenomenological approach to understand how teachers described their everyday responsibilities, the challenges they encountered, and the meanings they attached to their work. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussion, I gathered their personal narratives about role balancing, workload strain, professional growth, coping mechanisms, and self-care. The study also aimed to draw educational insights that may guide teacher support systems and school workload practices. By giving voice to teachers' experiences, this study sought to contribute to policies and practices that value teacher well-being and professional effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to explore the lived experiences of teachers handling multiple roles in Maa District. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to gather rich descriptions of how teachers understood, managed, and gave meaning to their overlapping responsibilities. Phenomenology was used to focus on the essence of their experiences rather than on numerical measurement. It also allowed the participants to express their thoughts, feelings, struggles, coping strategies, and insights in their own words. Thus, the approach provided a deeper understanding of teachers' emotional, professional, and contextual realities.

The researcher observed ethical standards by ensuring social value, informed consent, voluntary participation, privacy, confidentiality, justice, transparency, and participant safety. Before data collection, the researcher secured the necessary permission from the Graduate School, the Schools Division Office, the Public Schools District Supervisor, and the concerned school heads. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of the interviews, their right to withdraw, and the measures used to protect their identities. Codes or pseudonyms were used in reporting the responses, while the transcripts and recordings were stored securely. The interviews were also conducted in a safe and comfortable setting so that participants could share their experiences freely.



The study involved twelve (12) public school teachers from selected schools in Maa District who were handling multiple roles. They were chosen through purposive sampling because they had direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation. The inclusion criteria required that the participants had at least three years of teaching experience in the public school system, were actively handling three or more roles such as adviser, coordinator, coach, or committee member, and were willing to share their lived experiences. Data were gathered through seven in-depth interview informants and five focus group discussion informants using a validated semi-structured interview guide. The guide contained open-ended questions about their lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and educational insights.

The data gathering procedure began with securing approval and coordinating with school authorities regarding the conduct of the interviews. After permission was granted, the researcher contacted the selected participants, explained the study, and obtained their consent. The interviews and focus group discussion were audio-recorded with permission to ensure accuracy, and field notes were taken to capture important observations. After data collection, the recordings were transcribed verbatim and reviewed carefully. The responses were then analyzed using Colaizzi's method and thematic content analysis to identify significant statements, core ideas, and emerging themes.

To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the researcher used data triangulation by comparing information from in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and reflective accounts from participants. The transcripts were read repeatedly to become familiar with the data, and meaningful statements were coded based on the research questions. These codes were clustered into core ideas and then grouped into major themes that represented the shared experiences of teachers. The researcher also practiced careful reflection to avoid forcing personal assumptions into the interpretation. Through this process, the study generated themes that reflected the authentic voices and realities of teachers handling multiple roles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results generated from the data gathered. It is sequenced based on the objectives of the study as presented in the first chapter.

Lived Experiences of Teachers Handling Multiple Roles in Maa District

Results revealed that teachers handling multiple roles experienced constant strain in balancing instructional, administrative, and community-related responsibilities. A typical day involved teaching, mentoring students, attending meetings, coordinating school activities, checking reports, and preparing lessons within limited time. One teacher described this as "a balance gyud sa instructional and administrative duties" to support both student growth and school operations. These narratives show that teachers often moved from one task to another, requiring quick adjustments and strong prioritization. This finding reflects Role Theory because teachers had to respond to several expectations attached to their different school functions.

The findings also showed that multiple roles created workload strain, emotional fatigue, and difficulty maintaining full attention to classroom teaching. Some teachers explained that they felt overwhelmed when deadlines overlapped with lessons, meetings, paperwork, and learner needs. One participant shared that it was difficult to shift focus from teaching to reports and other school-related duties while still trying to give the best to learners. Another stated that the work was "grabe jud ka overwhelming ug makakapoy," especially because teaching duties still continued. These experiences support studies by Dayagbil et al. (2022), Eusebio and Tus (2023), and McCarthy et al. (2021), who noted that role overload contributes to fatigue, burnout, and work-life imbalance.

Moreover, teachers also experienced professional growth as they performed expanded roles in school. Some participants expressed that their additional responsibilities helped them develop communication, leadership, problem-solving, and organizational skills. One teacher shared that a sense of purpose motivated her to continue because each responsibility contributed to a larger goal. These experiences show that multiple roles were not only sources of burden but also opportunities for teachers to understand school operations more deeply. This finding suggests that role expansion can strengthen professional identity when teachers receive support and when the roles are managed fairly.

Another important experience was the presence of workplace support, which helped teachers remain committed despite heavy responsibilities. Support from colleagues, school leaders, family, and the school community allowed teachers to share tasks, seek advice, and gain emotional encouragement. The participants recognized that teamwork made responsibilities more manageable and reduced the feeling of isolation. However, the findings also suggest that support should not depend only on personal relationships because teachers need systematic workload structures. Therefore, institutional support remains necessary to make multiple role performance sustainable and humane.

The study further revealed that teachers developed an expanded view of their profession. Before handling additional roles, some teachers saw teaching mainly as classroom instruction, but coordination and committee work helped them understand the larger school system. They realized that teaching also involved managing programs, supporting colleagues, connecting with parents, and contributing to the improvement of the whole school environment. This broader view strengthened their sense of professional purpose but also exposed



them to heavier expectations. Overall, the lived experiences of teachers reflected a complex mixture of burden, growth, support, and dedication.

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers Handling Multiple Roles

Results revealed that teachers coped with multiple roles by developing an adaptive professional identity. Instead of seeing themselves only as classroom teachers, they learned to accept that their work also required coordination, leadership, communication, and service beyond instruction. Participants used planning, prioritization, and organization to manage their time and tasks. One teacher explained that she set clear daily and weekly goals, broke tasks into manageable parts, and prioritized activities that were urgent or high-impact. These coping actions show how teachers adjusted their professional identity to meet the demands of their expanded responsibilities.

The findings also showed that sustainable workload management became a major coping mechanism. Teachers created to-do lists, used schedules, worked on reports during quiet hours, and completed tasks one at a time. Some participants used time-blocking to reduce the stress of shifting between competing responsibilities. Others learned to delegate tasks when support teams were available, allowing them to supervise while attending to other duties. These practices reflect problem-focused coping because teachers tried to organize and control the demands that created stress.

Teachers also coped through integrated role balancing practices that combined personal discipline, collegial support, emotional regulation, and self-care. They relied on colleagues for help, shared tasks with co-teachers, asked guidance from school leaders, and maintained communication with family members. Several teachers emphasized the importance of rest, prayer, hobbies, and personal time to recover from exhaustion. These practices align with Stress and Coping Theory because teachers used both problem-focused strategies, such as prioritizing tasks, and emotion-focused strategies, such as seeking support and protecting well-being. Thus, coping was not limited to finishing work but also involved preserving emotional strength.

Another coping pattern was the use of collaboration as a practical and emotional resource. Teachers recognized that multiple roles became easier when colleagues shared information on time, participated in activities, and supported school programs. Collaboration reduced the burden of doing tasks alone and created a sense of belonging. This finding supports the Job Demands-Resources Model because collegial support, leadership guidance, and teamwork served as resources that counterbalanced high job demands. Hence, schools that strengthen collaboration can help teachers handle multiple roles more effectively.

Overall, the coping mechanisms of teachers showed resilience, adaptability, and commitment. However, the findings also caution that resilience should not be used as a reason to maintain excessive workloads. Teachers can manage tasks through planning and support, but sustainable coping still requires reasonable role assignments, clear expectations, and sufficient resources. Their coping strategies reveal strength, but they also point to the need for systemic improvements. Therefore, teacher well-being must be protected through both personal strategies and institutional action.

Insights Drawn from the Experiences of Teachers Handling Multiple Roles

Results revealed that one major insight drawn from the experiences of teachers was the importance of time mastery. Teachers learned that managing multiple roles required clear priorities, realistic goals, and careful scheduling. Some participants realized that not all tasks could be completed at the same time, so they had to identify which responsibilities had the highest urgency and impact. This insight helped them avoid unnecessary confusion and reduce the pressure of overlapping tasks. Thus, time mastery became a practical lesson that allowed teachers to remain functional and focused despite heavy responsibilities.

The findings also showed that teachers gained insight into adaptive growth. Through multiple roles, they discovered that they could develop new capacities beyond classroom instruction. Some teachers became more confident in communicating with parents, coordinating with administrators, organizing programs, and solving school-related problems. One participant explained that she previously focused only on her classroom, but coordination helped her see the bigger picture of the school system. This insight shows that multiple roles can become opportunities for leadership and professional development when teachers are guided and supported properly.

Another important insight was the need for self-care boundaries. Teachers realized that they could not continue giving quality service if they ignored their own health, rest, and emotional needs. One participant stated that teachers must learn to trust themselves and say "no" when necessary. Others emphasized the importance of sleep, family time, hobbies, and moments of rest. This finding shows that self-care is not selfish but necessary for maintaining energy, passion, and commitment in teaching.

The study further revealed that teachers wanted others to understand that their resilience has limits. They expressed that the strength of teachers should not be used to justify poor working conditions or excessive role expectations. Instead, resilience should remind school systems to protect those who are responsible for learners' growth. Teachers' insights show that support systems must include workload clarity, emotional support, and fair distribution of tasks. Therefore, meaningful teacher support requires both appreciation and concrete structural help.



Overall, the insights of teachers handling multiple roles emphasized balance, growth, and humane work practices. Their experiences taught them to manage time, expand their professional capabilities, and protect personal well-being. These insights also show that school leaders should not only recognize teachers' dedication but also reduce unnecessary strain. When teachers are supported, they can perform their multiple roles with stronger motivation and better instructional presence. Thus, the insights drawn from the study offer valuable direction for improving teacher welfare and school effectiveness.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings revealed that teachers handling multiple roles in Maa District experienced both professional growth and serious workload strain. Their roles as teachers, advisers, coordinators, mentors, and community partners shaped their professional identity and broadened their understanding of school work. However, these same roles also created fatigue, stress, and tension when expectations overlapped. These findings support Role Theory by Biddle (1986), which explains that role conflict and role strain occur when individuals must respond to competing expectations. Therefore, schools must recognize that teachers' multiple roles require clear delineation, reasonable distribution, and strong institutional support.

In addition, the participants developed coping mechanisms that combined planning, prioritization, collaboration, emotional regulation, and self-care. These strategies helped them continue performing despite heavy responsibilities and limited time. The findings are supported by Stress and Coping Theory by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which explains that individuals respond to stress through practical and emotional coping strategies. However, the findings also imply that coping should not be treated as the sole responsibility of teachers. School systems must provide resources, leadership support, and workload policies that make coping sustainable rather than merely reactive.

From their lived experiences, teachers gained insights that highlighted time mastery, adaptive growth, and self-care boundaries. These insights show that teachers can develop leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills through multiple roles, but they also need protection from excessive demands. The Job Demands-Resources Model by Demerouti et al. (2001) supports this implication because high job demands can lead to burnout when resources are insufficient. Hence, schools should strengthen resources such as collegial support, mentoring, administrative assistance, and wellness-oriented policies. These implications emphasize that teacher effectiveness depends not only on personal dedication but also on supportive work conditions.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Department of Education may continue strengthening policies that reduce unnecessary administrative work and allow teachers to focus on instruction, while ensuring that workload reforms are actually implemented in schools. School administrators may conduct regular workload audits, clarify role expectations, distribute coordinatorships fairly, provide support staff when possible, and establish mentoring or teamwork systems for teachers handling multiple roles. Teachers may continue using time management, task prioritization, collaboration, delegation, and self-care practices to sustain their well-being and professional effectiveness. Schools may also create wellness programs, peer support groups, and protected planning time so that teachers can recover from role strain and remain instructionally present. Future researchers may conduct comparative, mixed-method, or longitudinal studies to examine how teachers' multiple roles change across districts, school sizes, and policy implementation contexts.

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