

# STRANGERS' BATTLE: ADVERSITIES AND COPING MECHANISMS OF LIBRARY PARAPROFESSIONALS MANAGING SCHOOL LIBRARIES

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## ABSTRACT

This phenomenological qualitative research focused on library paraprofessionals' adversities and their coping mechanisms managing a school library. Nine (9) library paraprofessionals from the provinces of Davao del Sur and Davao Occidental took part in this study through Key Informant Interviews (KII). Results revealed that they wrestled with heavy workloads, lack of training and background in library management, poor implementation of RA 9246, and absence of training opportunities. In coping with these, they developed a strong support system and have kept a positive attitude towards their work. They also gained insights, presented into three (3) themes: making the library a priority, keeping a positive attitude and collaborating with library organizations. To fully attain effective and efficient school library services, the Department of Education (DepEd) are called for the strict implementation of Republic Act 9246. Also, librarians are prompted to collaborate with professional organizations in advocating and standing for the strong implementation of the said law.

**Keywords:**  
*Library and information science, Library and information centers, Library in-charge, Phenomenological, Philippines*

## INTRODUCTION

As professional librarian and educators, we are well aware that a school library is an integral part of every educational institution. We are persuaded that, in addition to the curricula taught, the library assists teachers in making teaching efficient and meaningful by honing students' skills and training them for future challenges. In fact, it is strongly believed that the efficiency of a school library program is largely determined by the human resources available both inside and outside the organization (International Federation of Library Association, 2015). As a result, well-equipped and trained professionals contribute to the overall effectiveness of school libraries, as they allow students to establish the requisite intellectual scaffolds for using information effectively and building knowledge and understanding of their subject areas (Todd, Gordon & Lu, 2012). Sadly, despite this, educational institutions, especially in the government sector, continue to appoint library paraprofessionals to manage school libraries. This can be seen in the United States (Douglas & Wilkinson, 2010), Australia (Godfree & Neilson, 2018), Philadelphia (Kachel & Lance, 2013), Minas Gerais, Brazil (Paiva & Duarte, 2017), Namibia (Shatona & Namibia Library and Information Council, 2007), and Tanzania (Shatona & Namibia Library and Information Council, 2007). It is also observed in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), especially in India (Singh, 2015), Indonesia (Shandu, 2014), and Malaysia (Kamal & Othman, 2012). Our country, the Philippines, is no exception, with the majority of school libraries in the country being run by people with no librarianship training or experience (Batiancila, 2007).



According to the Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science, a library paraprofessional is a person with a baccalaureate degree who has been trained to understand particular procedures and apply them according to pre-established rules in normal circumstances without exercising professional judgment (Reitz, 2020). This means they've been entrusted with a specific professional role but don't have the necessary credentials to practice as a fully qualified professional. Library paraprofessionals are often teachers who have been appointed with managing school libraries as part of their additional duties (Paton-Ash & Wilmot, 2015; Shandu, 2014).

Several reasons have been attributed to the issue of library paraprofessionals overseeing school libraries, including a shortage of resources for trained librarians (Fraser, 2013), staffing reductions due to technological advancements, changes in instructional practice, the addition of classroom libraries, and the movement toward smaller schools (Gretes, 2013), as well as policymakers and school administrators' lack of understanding and value of school libraries (Fasola, 2015; Godfree & Neilson, 2018; Hart & Zinn, 2007; Ikojo-Odongo, 2008; Petters & Otong, 2012; World Bank, 2008).

Knowing that our country, the Philippines, specifically the government, does not prioritize public school libraries in the allocation of resources and improvements is excruciating (Totanes, cited in Batiancila, 2007). As a result, library paraprofessionals, often teachers, were tasked to manage public school libraries. As librarian and educators, we find this problem concerning because it disputes the current legislation, RA 9246 (2004), which regulates policies and guidelines for ensuring the effectiveness of libraries and library programs. Furthermore, the legislation stresses the importance of librarians managing school libraries properly. As a result, school libraries should not be run by untrained staff, and unqualified personnel should not be permitted to work in them. This creates an atmosphere in which "libraries are seen as having no inherent value" (Johnson, 2007), as library paraprofessionals lack the skills, experiences and professional competencies in the field of librarianship (Dlamini & Brown, 2010; Kamal & Othman, 2012; Mgina & Lwehabura, 2011; Shandu & Namibia Library and Information Council, 2007). Hence, without relevant training, full range of library services cannot be given (Godfree & Neilson, 2018) which may lead to more serious issues such as misclassification and disorganization of library materials (Benard & Dulle, 2014; Paton-Ash & Wilmot, 2015), poorly organized collection (Benard & Dulle, 2014; Funmilayo, 2013; Owate & Iroha, 2013; Shandu, 2014; Sidley, 2010), and limited library hours and closed libraries (Arua & Chinaka, 2011; Benard & Dulle, 2014; Gilmore-See, 2010; Mtshali, 2011).

With all of the evidence provided, we recognized that when school libraries are operated by library paraprofessionals, a slew of problems emerge because they are not qualified or equipped in library management. Thus, this led us to look at the problems faced by library paraprofessionals who run school libraries and how they coped with them.

### ***Theoretical Lens***

Our research was based on Gilbert's (1978) Performance Management Theory, which states that competence and performance are inextricably connected, and that competence enables performance without requiring unnecessary effort or expense. Thus, this theory explains the idea that when individuals lack the thorough knowledge, skills, training, background and competencies in any field of specialization, their performance will be affected. In view of our study, the library paraprofessionals' different fields of specialization and background which were not related to librarianship affected their overall performance and management of school libraries.

Our research was also aided by Bandura's (1977) Self-efficacy Theory. Perceptions of self-efficacy influence how people think and respond, as well as how they emotionally react. Self-efficacy also influences activity selection, effort, perseverance, and achievement. People who have high self-efficacy for completing an assignment are more likely to engage, work harder, persevere longer when faced with



obstacles, and reach higher levels of achievement. In the context of our research, library paraprofessionals' lack of expertise and training in the field of library management can contribute to low self-efficacy in performing functions and tasks in school libraries, but when participants have high beliefs in problem solving, they are more likely to think creatively in seeking a solution or to respond positively to difficult situations. When library paraprofessionals have a strong sense of self-efficacy, they are better able to deal with adversity by thinking and responding positively, persevering and working harder, and effectively solving problems.

Lastly, our study could be explained by the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This model describes how a person's coping mechanisms for dealing with problems are affected by his or her resources as well as the resources present in the environment. Furthermore, this model distinguishes coping strategies into two categories: problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. Problem-focused are means focusing on finding a solution to a problem, while emotion-focused are means focusing on the use of emotional resources in coping with the problem. In view of our study, participants might use the emotion-focused strategies in coping with adversities in managing the school library. These strategies could include their behaviors, values, personalities, demeanors, and other traits and characteristics that help them deal with difficult situations. On one hand, library paraprofessionals can use problem-focused strategies to solve their problems by using available resources in the community, such as assistance from coworkers, colleagues, family, and professionals. This model helped us in understanding the impact of our participants' resources and environmental resources on the coping strategies they used.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The purpose of our phenomenological qualitative research study was to explore the adversities and coping mechanisms of library paraprofessionals managing public school libraries in the provinces of Davao del Sur and Davao Occidental.

### ***Research Questions***

1. What are the adversities of library paraprofessionals managing public school libraries in the provinces of Davao del Sur and Davao Occidental?
2. What are their coping mechanisms to address the adversities they have experienced?
3. What insights can they share to the school administrators, librarians and library associations, fellow library paraprofessionals, and to the academe in general?

### ***Review of Related Literature***

Several studies have shown that having access to a qualified school library professional is the most essential factor for a successful school library program (IFLA, 2015). The management of school libraries by qualified professionals significantly contributes to students' reading and comprehension (Gretes, 2013; Kachel & Lance, 2013; Krashen, Lee, & McQuillan, 2010; New York Comprehensive Center, 2011; Pentchoukov, 2013; World Bank, 2008) by supporting the curriculum as well the teaching-learning process (American Association of School Librarians, 2011; Cullifer, 2013; Fakomogbon, Bada, & Omiola, 2012; Francis, Lance, & Lietzau, 2010; Lance, Marcia, & Schwarz, 2009; Trilling, 2010; Yusuf, 2014), and the overall academic achievement of the students (Achtermann, 2008; American Association of School Librarians, 2007; Francis, Lance, & Lietzau, 2010; Fraser, 2013; Gilmore-See, 2010; Gretes, 2013; Kachel, 2013; Marzoli & Papa, 2017; Mullis, et al., 2012; PA School Library Project et al., 2012; Scholastics, 2008; Todd, Gordon, & Lu, 2012). Despite these contributions, educational institutions, especially those in the public sector, continue to appoint library paraprofessionals to manage school libraries (Batiancila, 2007; Douglas & Wilkinson, 2010; Godfree & Neilson, 2018; Kachel & Lance, 2013; Kamal & Othman, 2012; Mgina & Lwehabura, 2011; Paiva & Duarte, 2017; Shandu, 2014; Shatona & Namibia Library and Information Council, 2007; Singh, 2015).



The management of school libraries by library paraprofessionals is due to several factors. In South Africa, for example, schools currently lack support for eligible school librarians (Fraser, 2013). It was also mentioned that finding skilled staff is becoming more difficult, as librarianship is considered a scarce ability. Unfortunately, the same problem was posed in Nigerian school libraries (Egesimba, et al., 2011; Funmilayo, 2013). In New York City, there has also been a decline in librarian personnel, with the argument that changes in technology, shifts in educational methods, the addition of classroom libraries, and the movement toward smaller schools have made librarians unnecessary (Gretes, 2013). Thus, the importance of having qualified professionals to man school libraries had declined. Similarly, education policymakers in Australia have failed to recognize the importance of school librarians in public schools (Godfree & Neilson, 2018). In our country, Philippines, the government does not consider public school libraries in the allocation of resources and improvements (Totanes, cited in Batiancila, 2007). As a result, challenges to school libraries aroused from weak appreciation and inadequate knowledge among policy-makers and educators about the role of the school library (Hart & Zinn, 2007; Ikojo-Odongo, 2008; World Bank, 2008). This led to the assignment of library paraprofessionals, most of whom were teachers, to manage school libraries as part of their added responsibilities. These teachers confirmed that they were managing the school libraries without the professional skills required to guide both teachers and learners in the use for library resources (Shandu, 2014; Shatona & Namibia Library and Information Council, 2007). Hence, a full range of library services cannot be delivered without sufficient training and experience in librarianship (Godfree & Neilson, 2018), which would lead to numerous problems.

In India, the management of school libraries was encroached by persons from other filed of specialization (Singh, 2015). In Indonesia, a similar situation was found, where school libraries were usually operated by teachers who reported that they were managing the school libraries without the professional skills needed to direct both teachers and students in the use of library resources (Shandu, 2014). Apart from that, most Namibian teachers were assigned library duties in addition to their teaching responsibilities (Shatona & Namibia Library and Information Council, 2007). Similarly in Minas Gerais, Brazil and Betim, Brazil, school libraries were occupied by persons without librarianship education, mostly teachers and library technicians (Paiva & Duarte, 2017). The same as well in Australia (Godfree & Neilson, 2018), an increased number of school libraries run by unqualified staff was observed.

The problem of using unqualified library personnel was illustrated best by the study of Paton-Ash and Wilmot (2015) where it was revealed that library in charge does not understand the role of teaching of information skills because they are not trained or equipped to be a school librarian. Hence, there is a need for continuous skills development for these library personnel who are appointed to the role without any specialized training (Magara & Batambuze, 2009).

The lack of adequate skills and training of the library paraprofessionals (Dlamini & Brown, 2010; Shandu, 2014; Shatona & Namibia Library & Information Council, 2007) led to poor organization of library resources. This was illustrated in Nigeria, where it was discovered that library resources in school libraries were not only inadequate, but also badly organized, making it difficult to provide effective library and information services (Owate & Iroha, 2013). This was also confirmed in a study by Paton-Ash and Wilmot (2015), who discovered that despite having these resources available for use, the Dewey Decimal Classification System was not in place because the individual in charge of the library lacked understanding of it. Thus, when teachers and library in charge do not have ample training and background in library organization, school libraries just become random collections of books which offer no attraction to children and remain largely under-used (Douglas & Wilkinson, 2010).

The management of unqualified library personnel led to the problem of restricted and closed libraries. According to Arua and Chinaka (2011), restricted library hours are one of the problems in school libraries. Moreover, locked libraries also occurred because the teacher in charge of the library was busy teaching, which resulted to the students' limited access of the library because there was no one to





help them (Paton-Ash & Wilmot, 2015). In addition, these teachers teach in addition to managing the library, and in most cases, the library is closed when they are in class (Shandu, 2014). Hence, school libraries managed by unqualified staff result in severely curtailed library hours which are supposedly available for students, and library materials are left unattended and tend to be placed migrate from the library to other locations (Gilmore-See, 2010). Clearly, the absence of qualified personnel to manage the library creates an access problem for the students.

### ***Coping Mechanisms of Library Paraprofessionals***

Qualified human resources equipped with befitting competencies are needed for the post of the information and knowledge professionals (Rehman, 2008). Hence, the need for trainings and seminars of the library paraprofessionals are an essential aspect in managing school libraries. A study revealed that in Malaysia, teachers who were appointed to the school libraries had undergone trainings by enrolling short courses in basic library management which include library planning, financial planning, and organization management for both print and electronic resources (Kamal & Othman, 2012). These trainings could help them develop resource based learning programs and provide them with competencies needed for management and services of the school libraries (Walter, 2008). Hence, attendance to seminars and trainings help library paraprofessionals gain the basic knowledge and skills in library management.

One specific strategy for the successful delivery of service in school libraries is the collaborative support from other people. Such example is in Washington, D.C. where a school library gained a group of supportive parents called Parent Teachers Association (PTA), and community members, who come into the library weekly in assisting library routine tasks such as shelving, circulation and copying (Sonnen, 2008). Another collaborative effort was also seen in Sweden, where twenty-five (25%) of all public libraries combined with school libraries, thus, creating a dual-use school/community model library which provide library services to the users both in the school and public libraries (Swedish Arts Council, 2010). This was also similar to a study conducted in Illinois, where a joint library was created, combining resources from both public and school libraries in order to promote library services and meet the needs of the patrons (Kluever & Finley, 2012). Hence, the collaboration and support from others could help library paraprofessionals in dealing with their problems in school libraries, and could help them deliver good library services.

Clearly, it was shown in the related literature and studies presented the contributions of school libraries managed by librarians, specifically to the students' reading and comprehension, academic achievement and teaching-learning process. However, it was also made known that in spite of these contributions the management of school libraries by library paraprofessionals still exists, thus, creating bigger problems. Further, it was evident that library paraprofessionals used certain coping mechanisms which helped them solve some of their problems.

## **METHOD**

### ***Research Design***

Our study employed a phenomenological qualitative research design. This design intends to explore the behaviours, perspectives, feelings and experiences of people. It identifies and describes the essence of human experiences concerned with a phenomenon, understands the lived experiences of a selected and small number of subjects by extensive and prolonged engagement in order to develop patterns and relationships of meanings (Creswell, 2003; Elmusharaf, 2013; Fossey, et al., 2002). By using this research design, we were able to explore the lived experiences of the library paraprofessionals managing school libraries in the public sector. Specifically, we deciphered the adversities they experienced, and learned how they coped with them.



**Participants.** In this study, our participants were the library paraprofessionals managing public school libraries (both in elementary and secondary schools) in the provinces of Davao del Sur and Davao Occidental. Library paraprofessionals were graduates of a four year or two-year program, but were not degree holders of Bachelor of Library and Information Science or any program related to library science, and did not have a professional license for librarians. Moreover, my participants held a one-year experience in managing the school library. The explanation for this was that their role as library paraprofessionals was not permanent because it was constantly changing, especially when the school administrator and principal in their respective schools changed.

**Sampling.** We employed a purposive sampling technique in determining our participants. Purposive sampling technique involves a handpicking of participants (Cristobal & de la Cruz-Cristobal, 2013) based on the qualities they possess (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2015). It also involves identification and selection of individuals that are proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Specifically, we interviewed nine (9) library paraprofessionals managing public school libraries. Five (5) of them managed high school libraries, and four (4) managed elementary school libraries. This number met the minimum requirements in achieving the data saturation in phenomenological research. Saturated data can be attained at five to twenty-five participants (Creswell, as cited in Guetterman, 2015) or at six (Morse, 1994).

**Data Sources.** We gained the responses of our participants from Key Informant Interviews (KII) alone. After the interview, we organized the responses of our participants and sent them back to the participants through emails. Through this, we were able to verify if their responses were the correct and exact responses they had during our interview. We also made follow-up questions if ever they still had answers which were not included during our actual interview. Also, the data and supporting information used for our study were obtained from different journal articles, both print and online, and from books.

**Collection of Data.** We followed various procedures in achieving a smooth flow of interview with the participants. We chose qualified persons to validate our interview protocol. Our interview protocol was validated by three (3) librarians and one (1) qualitative researcher from other field of specialization. After, we secured letters of permission from the school superintendents of the Division of Digos City, Division of Davao del Sur and Division of Davao Occidental, allowing us to conduct the study in the public schools in Digos City, Davao del Sur and Davao Occidental, respectively. After receiving approval letters from the school superintendents of the three (3) divisions, we sent letters of permission to the principals of the schools where we planned to conduct our research, along with the approval letters from the school superintendents. In addition, we asked that the target participants, who were library paraprofessionals, allow us to perform the interview and collect relevant data.

Additionally, we thoroughly explained to our participants the nature, scope and purpose of our study. The need for clarity and awareness among our participants was necessary to ensure understanding about the reason of the interview. Also, we obtained verbal and written consents of our participants, indicating that they agreed to be part of the study. We informed and assured them that their identity, as well as the data we could gather would remain confidential and private. In addition, we validated their responses using a member validation protocol to achieve the credibility of the data. Furthermore, we used an in-depth interview or key informant interview in gathering the relevant data. Key informant interview (KII) is a loosely structured conversation which allows give-and-take questions and answers from us and our participants, respectively (Education Development Center, 2004). This results to the discovery of information from the key informants. Key informants refer to the participants who could provide the necessary and detailed information on a particular subject based on their knowledge of a particular phenomenon (Asia Pacific Division, 2011). We conducted the interview in a conducive place approved and chosen by the selected nine (9) participants. Beforehand, we established rapport to make our



participants comfortable and at ease. This allowed free flowing of ideas and responses to our research questions. In obtaining unlimited responses from our key informants, we raised follow-up questions encouraging them to share more detailed and necessary information related to the study. This helped us explore a subject in an in-depth discussion (Education development Center, 2004). All the responses we gathered during the interview were recorded using an audio tape and thorough note taking.

**Analysis and Interpretation of Data.** Data analysis is an activity of making sense of, interpreting and theorizing data that signifies a search for general statements among categories of data (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba 2007). It involves the reflection of the data gathered, including asking questions and interpretations during the study (Creswell, 2009). In interpreting and analyzing the responses of our participants, we used the steps namely first cycle coding, data reduction, second cycle coding and thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009). In thematic analysis, we used the method by Colaizzi (1978) and techniques of Anderson and Spencer (2002) which were the identification, analysis and report of patterns and themes within data. Creswell (2007) posited that analyzing data in a phenomenological research involves data reduction, analysis of themes and statements and meanings which researchers can draw surrounding the participants' experiences. In this study, we chose important statements and responses about the adversities they experienced and the coping mechanisms they applied to solve them. Their important responses were analyzed, grouped into common themes, and meanings were formulated based on their responses and experiences. Lastly, common themes were integrated to form the best meanings and descriptions of the adversities and coping mechanisms of the participants. These themes were supported with related literature and studies.

**Trustworthiness.** As the researchers of this study, it was essential for us to establish the worth of the study by evaluating its trustworthiness. By doing so, we followed the trustworthiness criteria set by Lincoln and Guba (1985) which include the establishment of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

**Credibility.** To ensure the credibility of the study, we identified and described our participants accurately (Holloway, 2001), conducted follow-up meetings with them and verified if their responses were complete and accurate. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. Elmusharaf (2013) further argued that credibility is the ability of the study to capture the purpose of the research through studying and identifying meanings from the results, which are not simply the product of research design errors, misunderstandings, or influence of unknown facts. Our purpose in conducting the study was to understand the phenomenon from our participant's perspective, because no other individuals, except them, can legitimately critique the credibility of our study's results.

Moreover, we established our study's results as credible or believable through the conduct of member checking and peer debriefing. Member checking refers to checking of the research findings and conclusions by the participants from whom the data were originally obtained (Hadi, 2016). Thus, we made sure that the results, findings and conclusions of the study were reviewed and checked by our participants by sending it to them personally and through email. On the other hand, peer debriefing is a method wherein the researcher discusses the research methodology, data analysis and interpretations continuously throughout the research process with his/her peer who is not directly involved in the study (Hadi, 2016). Hence, we ensured that the peer debriefer of our study was a skilled qualitative researcher who meaningfully questioned our interpretations and provided additional explanations related to our study.

**Transferability.** Transferability is the extent to which the findings or results of the qualitative research can be transferred to other settings or contexts (Bitsch, 2005) and can have meaning to others in similar situations (Streubert, Speziale, & Carpenter, 2003). We developed the transferability of our study



by providing readers with evidences that our study's findings could be applicable to other situations, time and populations. Hence, we achieved this through thorough description and clear discussion of the results.

**Dependability.** Dependability holds the view that if we will replicate or repeat the study with the same or similar participants in the same context, its findings or results will remain the same. In this sense, we ensured that the data from the interview were accurately noted and recorded, completely transcribed, well-translated, fairly analyzed and concisely written. Streubert, Speziale, and Carpenter (2003) explained that dependability is met through credibility of the findings.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability means that the results or findings of the research study coincide with that of the answers of the participants during the interview (Polit & Hungler, 2004; Trochim, 2006). We achieved this criterion by conducting a complete, clear and accurate documentation during the in-depth interview with the participants. Also, we achieved confirmability by thorough rechecking and re-evaluation of the data obtained from them. Furthermore, we provided and kept an audit trail for us to ensure that no biases and distortions of data were done. This enabled us to determine if the conclusions, interpretations and recommendations could be traced to their sources and if they were supported by the responses of the participants. In developing a detailed audit trail, we documented all data collection and analysis procedures throughout the study (Carcary, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Thus, with the development of audit trails, the trustworthiness of the study is well established (Koch, 2006), and an auditor or second party can confirm the study's findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

### *Ethical Considerations*

**Informed Consent.** Prior to the in-depth interview, we obtained both written and verbal consents from the participants. By doing so, they became aware and understood the nature and purpose of the study. This is also to check their eagerness and willingness to be part of our study. Postholm and Madsen (2006) explained that the researcher must guarantee that the participants will have the right to know the purpose of the research study, as well as their role in the research process. Participants should also understand the benefits and risks they may face as a result of being part of the research study (Fritz, 2008). Hence, we requested permission from the participants to conduct an in-depth interview or the key informant interview through a written consent that was signed by us and the participants. The British Educational Research Association (2010) posited that voluntary informed consent allows the participants to voluntarily agree to participate in the research study, ensures that they understand the process in which they are to be engaged, including the reasons why their participation is necessary and how it will be used, and how and to whom the collected data will be reported.

As researchers, we made sure that the participants voluntarily agreed to be part of our study. However, they may have had the right to decline to answer any of the research questions, end the interview and withdraw from our agreement. Fritz (2008) explained that the participants can make independent decisions and withdraw from being part of the study without the fear of negative consequences. Moreover, we also informed them that an audio tape would be used to record our whole conversation during the interview. Through this, we were able to gather the complete and accurate data.

Aside from obtaining informed consent from the participants, we also secured and protected the confidentiality of the information and privacy of the participants by not identifying their names and the institutions they were connected to in any reports using the data we obtained during the interview. Additionally, the consecutive use of information and records we gathered was under the standard data use policies that protect the anonymity of our participants, as well the schools with which they were employed. Moreover, we conducted the interview alone. Faculty and administrators from our school were not present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. And lastly, our participants read and understood everything written in the informed consent, and we answered their questions before the





interview for their satisfaction. We also gave them copies of the informed consent with all the necessary signatories.

**Confidentiality, Privacy and Anonymity.** Confidentiality means the treatment of information with non-disclosure and an assurance that the information collected from the participants will not be divulged to the public and to other persons without their permission (Philippine Health Research Ethics Board, 2017). We achieved confidentiality of the participants by maintaining anonymously the data or records, ensuring that the data collected would leave no identifiers to the individuals, securing code names or using pseudonyms, not discussing the issues from the individual interview with others, non-disclosure of the things an individual said during the interview, and making unknown the identity of the individuals and places in the dissemination of the study in order to protect their identity (Wiles, et al., 2006). On the other hand, anonymity is protected by making it impossible to link aspects of data to a specific person or institution (De Vos, et al., 2002).

In the context of the research study, we carefully observed the participants' right to confidentiality, anonymity and privacy. We ensured that the data which we obtained from them would not be divulged to other persons or parties. We held responsible to the right of the participant's privacy by protecting all the necessary information and identifiers linking to them. Also, it was their personal choice of to what extent they answered the research questions and follow-up questions that arose during the interview. We observed the anonymity of the participants by giving them code names during the data representation. Through this, no other persons, other than us knew the code names of the participants. Creswell (2009) explained that it is essential to mask the names of the participants. Thus, the use of pseudonyms or code names was the primary method of preserving the anonymity of our participants (National Centre for Research Methods, 2008).

**Risks, benefits and conflict of interest.** This study was beneficial to the participants as this served as an avenue for them to share the adversities in managing a school library. Also, this gave them an opportunity to be heard by the school administrators, fellow library paraprofessionals, as well as the librarians. Additionally, participants were able to share the different coping mechanisms they employed in solving their adversities. Thus, inspiring their fellow library paraprofessionals who were battling with the same problems. Moreover, there were no risks associated with participating in our study. As to the conflict of interest, none was found as we strictly followed the criteria set for the conduct of our study.

## Results

### *Adversities of Library Paraprofessionals Managing School Libraries*

We deciphered four (4) main themes as adversities of library paraprofessionals managing school libraries. They experienced heavy workloads, lack of knowledge and training in library management, poor implementation of the law, and absence of training opportunities.

**Heavy workloads.** During our interview, we learned that library paraprofessionals have a lot on their plates. They struggled to find time to run the library since the majority of them were teachers who were preoccupied with their teaching duties. An adviser and science teacher shared, "*Gamay ra ang mahatag nako na time sa library kay naa man koy advisory ug naa koy science I na subject.*" (Since I have an advisory and regular classes to attend, my time in the library is limited.) (Q1.3, P7). They also explained that their teaching responsibilities caused them to close the library. Thus, library services were disrupted and were not available to the students. One of our participants sadly recalled, "*Dili jud maabli ang library tungod pud sa subject loads. Dili pud kaadto ug library ang mga bata tungod pud na ang in charge sa library kay naa poy klase.*" (Owing to subject loads, the library will be closed. The students are unable to visit the library since the library in-charge (library paraprofessional) is in class.) (Q1.3, P6).

It was discouraging to learn that library paraprofessionals' heavy workloads prevented them from properly supervising and monitoring the library and students. A sad teacher shared to us her sentiments,



*“Ang mga bata dili pod naku mamonitor.”* (I am unable to keep track of the students.) (Q1.4, P1). The lack of supervision and monitoring of the school library resulted to book losses. Our participant worriedly shared, *“Ang mga dictionaries nag ihatag sa teachers kay murag unum nalang ang nahabilin, ang mga bata mag bitbit man gud. Ang mga books mangawala kada quarter.”* (Teacher-donated library materials have gone missing.) (Q1.5, P6).

**Lack of knowledge and training in library management.** Another issue that our participants discussed was their lack of library management experience and training. They were forthright in admitting that they were not librarians and lacked a library science education. One of them humbly confessed, *“Dili ra baya jud ko library science graduate, wala koy knowledge about library.”* (Since I am not a library science graduate, I am unfamiliar with the field of library management.) (Q1.3, P5). The inadequate knowledge and training of our participants hindered them to accomplish professional functions required from a librarian particularly cataloguing. They emphasized that they have difficulty classifying the books since they do not possess the cataloging skills which resulted to the unavailability of card catalog in their respective libraries. A high school teacher wholeheartedly shared her sentiments, *“Dili man ko knowledgeable about card catalog, dili man ko kabalo ana, unsaon na ako gibutang lang man ko as in charge lang.”* (Since I was only appointed as a library in charge, I don't have any cataloguing experience.) (Q1.4, P5). Furthermore, it appears that our participants' lack of librarianship skills resulted in inefficient libraries, as the majority of the libraries they operated were viewed as storage rooms. Also, some teachers considered it a place for eating and sleeping. Our participant wistfully described, *“Dati kasi maam, ang library is mura lang sya ug bodega, then punduhanan lang sa mga teachers, mangutulog sila diri inig vacant time, mangaon sila diri which is bawal.”* (The school library was only used as a storage space, as well as a place to sleep and eat.) (Q1.1, P2).

**Poor implementation of the law.** Library paraprofessionals believed that the law which governs the policies and standards for school libraries was poorly implemented. This was evidently seen from the inadequate support from the school administrators. They conveyed that school administrators lost their priority towards library and librarians, which supposedly one of the important needs of the learners. They further implied that school administrators were only focused on the school curriculum, new programs, and infrastructures. A grade 1 adviser courageously shared these sentiments, *“Focus ra ang administrators sa curriculum, mga bag-o na infrastructures ug programs, nawala ang ilahang prioritization sa mga basic needs sa mga learners which is the library.”* (Administrators were solely concerned with the school's curriculum, new buildings, and services. The school library, which is one of the most important needs of students, was not prioritized.) (Q1.3, P1). Library paraprofessionals also explained that administrators in the Department of Education would not hire a librarian because they failed to recognize their importance in a school. A high school teacher explicated this to us, *“Basta public schools, the DepEd will not hire a librarian, kasi hindi nila makita yung importance of having a librarian in a school.”* (Usually in public schools, the DepEd administrators will not hire a librarian because they do not realize their importance in the school.) (Q1.4, P2).

Without a doubt, weak implementation of the law can be seen by the administrators' lack of financial support to the school library. This became a barrier in providing adequate library resources for the students. As a result, necessary library materials were not purchased, and remained unavailable to the students. Our dismayed participant looked back on her experiences, *“I tried to ask to purchase some reference books, ang problem is walay budget, wala jud syay budget, ang na request lang jud nako nga na-purchase is dictionary kay mangita jud ang mga bata ug dictionary, ang newspaper sad to say wala jud nahatag kay tungod walay budget.”* (I tried to purchase reference books but was unable to do so due to a lack of funds. The dictionary was the only thing purchased because it was really helpful to the students. However, due to financial constraints, other requested materials such as newspapers were not provided.) (Q1.1, P3). These concrete scenarios resulted to undeveloped library collection. One of our participants strongly attested, *“So far, kulang ang mga books.”* (Books are inadequate.) (Q1.3, P4).



Aside from the library's lack of funding, poor physical facilities were also blamed on financial constraints. Some of our participants described their library as run-down, old, and with scraped floors. This representation clearly outlined by our participant, "*Ang library guba, nakaraan na kaayo, guba ug buslot na ang salog.*" (The library was very old, and the flooring had already begun to deteriorate.) (Q1.3, P9). In addition, library paraprofessionals shared that their school library had a limited seating capacity and no electricity, making it impossible to accommodate a whole section class. These issues were cheerlessly recounted by our participants, "*Very small ang space sa library, magdasok ang mga studyante bisan ni isa ka section guot na sya.*" (The library is too small to hold an entire class.) (Q1.3, P2), and "*Wala pud mi kuryente maam.*" (We don't have access to electricity.) (Q1.3, P2).

**Absence of training opportunities.** During the interview, it became clear to us that library paraprofessionals do not have access to library management training. According to them, they were discouraged to attend trainings and seminars because these were not funded and supported by the school administrators. Apart from this, whenever they attend seminars, they would have to pay from their own pocket. Our despairing participant shared this sad reality, "*Wala na jud ko ka-attend ug seminar sukad, three years ko as library in charge, sige ra jud ko pangayo na unta makaseminar ko.*" (I was unable to attend seminars during my three years as library in-charge (library paraprofessional).) (Q1.5, P6). Also, another upset participant expressed her views, "*Dili man gud funded sa school ang seminars. Gusto unta ko muapil ug seminars para at least naa pud koy gamay matun-an, dili man gud funded, wala lagi budget.*" (I've always wanted to go to workshops, but the school doesn't fund them due to a lack of funds.) (Q1.5, P5).

### ***Coping Mechanisms of Library Paraprofessionals***

In terms of library paraprofessionals' coping mechanisms, the findings of our research revealed two major (2) themes. To cope with their adversities, our participants developed a support system and always kept a positive attitude.

**Developed a support system.** In coping with the adversities, our participants developed a strong support system for the library. This support system includes collaboration and assistance from the students, teachers, parents, profit and non-profit organizations. It also includes the personal assistance provided by library paraprofessionals to the library. One concrete example was the formation of a library club or organization. Members of this club or organization were usually students who assisted them in terms of arranging the books in the library. A high-school teacher proudly looked back on her creative ideas, "*Isa sa strategies, nag-form ko ug club which is the book lovers' club, sila naga-assist sa akoo, every noon break naa sila sa library, mutabang sila ug pahimutang ug arrange sa mga books.*" (I formed a book lover's club. Students who were members of this club assisted me especially in the arrangement of the books in the library.) (Q2.3, P3).

Library paraprofessionals also shared that the Parent-Teachers Organization (PTA) was very supportive when it comes to the welfare of the school library. As a matter of fact, they received book donations from the said organization. One of our participants gladly recalled, "*Naa pod toy isa ka set na books na gihatag sa PTA.*" (The PTA donated one set of books in the library.) (Q2.3, P7). Also, our participants asked support from other schools, and other profit or non-profit organizations by asking for book solicitations. Through this idea, they were able to grow the library collection. One of them proudly looked back on, "*Nagsolicit ko 5 years ago, mga books na donated for the past 5 years from universities sa Davao City, mao pod last na nareceive namo.*" (Five years ago, I ask for book donations from the different universities in Davao City.) (Q2.3, P4).

In addition, library paraprofessionals supported the school library using their own money. They explained that if they would just wait for the budget, nothing good would happen. One of our high school



participants grievously expressed, *“Kuot-kuot sa personal na bulsa kay kung maghulat ko sa budget wala may mahitabo.”* (I spent my own money because I knew nothing would happen if I waited for the budget.) (Q2.3, P2).

**Kept a positive attitude.** Being optimistic helped library paraprofessionals dealt with their adversities. Having the virtues of patience, love for work and faith inspired them to surpass the struggles they were going through. These positive views expressed by our high school participant, *“Patience maam, patience, love sa work, and yung mga struggles maam gina-include lang jud sa akoang daily prayers na kaya nakuni.”* (Staying patient, loving my work and praying helped me overcome the problems I have encountered.) (Q2.1, P2).

***Insights for School Administrators and Academe, Librarians and Library Associations, Fellow Library Paraprofessionals***

Our participants shared three (3) insights for the school administrators and academe, librarians and library associations, and to their fellow library paraprofessionals. These insights were: making the library a priority, keeping a positive attitude, and collaborating with the library organizations.

**Making the library a priority.** The library paraprofessionals were hopeful that the library would be prioritized and given importance by the school administrators by giving their full support both financially, and morally. They added that superintendents must not take for granted the importance of having a library in a school, and they must give ample amount of attention to it. Our participant sincerely expressed, *“Dili lang unta nila itake for granted ang importance sa library, kinahanglan jud ug pagtagad, ana lang akong ma-share sa superintendents.”* (Superintendents should not take for granted the importance of the library, and give school library the attention it deserves.) (Q3.4, P1).

Our participants also added that administrators should include the financial needs of the library in the school improvement plan and annual procurement plan, so that its needs would be properly addressed. Thus, school library should become part of the overall program of the Department of Education. These were expressed by a high school teacher, *“Ang library dapat himuon jud siya na part sa school program, the DepEd program.”* (The library should be part of the overall program of the Department of Education.) (Q3.4, P2).

Additionally, a conducive environment for study is essential for an effective learning to takes place. In order to achieve this, administrators should create a functional and useful school library for the students. This insight was clearly conveyed by our concerned participant, *“Ang admin dako jud na siya ug part, isa jud dapat tagaan ug isa ka room para sa library nga dali ra pod ma-access sa mga bata para mahimo pud siyang conducive sa mga bata.”* (The administrators should give a specific room intended for the library that is conducive for the learners, and can be easily accessed by the students.) (Q3.4, P6).

And lastly, a functional school library and successful library services could be greatly achieved with the expertise of the librarians. Thus, our participants recognized the idea of hiring a full-time librarian in their respective schools. A library paraprofessional clearly expressed, *“Dapat naa jud full time librarian kay lisod kayo walay full time librarian mas mayo jud ng naay full time librarian.”* (It is impossible to function without a full-time librarian.) (Q3.4, P7).

**Keeping a positive attitude.** Our participants realized that one should be resourceful and innovative in surpassing the different endeavours in the school library. This optimism would help their fellow library paraprofessionals learn the different tasks in managing the library and developing its collection. This message was positively conveyed by our participant, *“Kung i-assign ta ana na task dapat dili ta doubtful mangita ta ug way like mag-research pud ta kung mao ni siya nga task ang gihatag sa atoa at least naa pud tay idea nga in-ana ang mahimo being the library-in-charge sa school library.”* (If





we will be appointed as the library in charge (library paraprofessional), we must not be doubtful, we must find ways to do our tasks as the person in charge of the library, like we research tasks and ideas related to the management of school library.) (Q3.3, P1).

Library paraprofessionals also emphasized that time management is an essential factor to consider in the success of managing the school library. They stressed to their fellow library paraprofessionals that it is important to religiously devote their time to the library even if how little that time is. One participant eagerly stated, *“If you are in charge of the library, unta bahalag gamay lang ang atong time for the library service, we will devote our time for work, kanang manage sa time siguro maam, time management lang sya maam, kasia ko nagawa man naku namuanhi sa library bisan akoo na jud unta tong personal time.”* (If you are the in charge of the library (library paraprofessional), you must devote your time for work, even if how little it is for the library service, you must know how to manage your time, like proper time management, because I was able to successfully devote a little time for the library, even if that little time is my personal time.) (Q3.3, P2).

**Collaborating with library organizations.** Another insight shared was that library paraprofessionals should collaborate with the professional library organizations. Since members of these organizations are professional librarians, they could help our participants regarding matters in managing the library such as the proper processing of books and creation of programs and activities for the students. This was specifically shared by a grade 1 teacher, *“Mag-ask ug advice from the professional librarians about how to process the books, what are the possible activities and programs nga intended sa library nga maka-contribute sa school.”* (Ask for advice from the professional librarians about how to process the books, what are the possible activities and programs intended for the library which will contribute to the school.) (Q3.3, P2).

## Discussion

### *Adversities of Library Paraprofessionals*

Library paraprofessionals were confronted with several adversities while managing school library. They wrestled with heavy workloads, lack of knowledge and training in library management, poor implementation of the law, and absence of training opportunities.

Most of our participants were teachers and had experienced heavy workloads. Given that they were busy with their teaching tasks, they found it difficult to manage their time well. As a result, they could only devote a small portion of their free time to the library. This was also the case in Tanzania, where some school libraries had no set opening hours and were only available for a limited time because the library in charge was busy teaching. (Benard & Dulle, 2014). Despite the fact that many students wished to use the library for longer periods of time, library paraprofessionals were unable to do so due to their classes. This made it difficult for them to offer quality library services to the students. It had been a struggle for them to balance their library work and their teaching responsibilities. That was why, as the person in charge of the library and a teacher, they needed to manage their time well and double their effort.

In addition, since their primary role was teaching, maintaining the school library was only an additional task for our participants. As a result, their focus was on teaching and teaching-related activities, which resulted in unfinished library work. Due to their heavy teaching loads, they had to close the library, making library services inaccessible to students. A similar issue was seen in a study where some school libraries were closed due to the reliance on teachers to man the libraries who were busy teaching, creating an access problem to the children (Paton-Ash & Wilmot, 2015). Restricted library hours were also mentioned as a problem in school libraries (Arua & Chinaka, 2011). As a matter of fact, teachers and learners confirmed that their use of school libraries is restricted in terms of time they had to use it



(Shandu, 2014). When school libraries operated without a single certified librarian, the result would be severely curtailed library hours which are supposedly available for students (Gilmore-See, 2010). Thus, school libraries operated by library paraprofessionals have an adverse impact on library services, rendering them inefficient for students.

Another bottleneck experienced by our participants was their inadequate knowledge and training in library management. Several studies also revealed that most persons designated in school libraries lack the relevant training, experiences and professional competencies in the field of librarianship (Benard & Dulle, 2014; Dlamini & Brown, 2010; Shatona & Namibia Library and Information Council, 2007). Also, most of our participants were teachers who were designated to the school library without the educational background and training in librarianship. This concern was also experienced in other countries like India (Singh, 2015), United Kingdom (Douglas & Wilkinson, 2010), Philadelphia (Kachel & Lance, 2013), Australia (Godfree & Neilson, 2018), Malaysia (Kamal & Othman, 2012), and Philippines (Batiancala, 2007). Aside from these countries, school libraries in Tanzania were also managed by language teachers, even students and office attendant who were not professionals in the field of librarianship (Benard & Dulle, 2014). In addition, most school library employees in Betim, Brazil were library technicians, a position which does not require an undergraduate degree in librarianship (Paiva & Duarte, 2017). Likewise, teachers, employed as library in charge in Indonesia, confirmed that they were managing the school libraries without the professional skills required to guide both teachers and learners in the use of library resources (Shandu, 2014).

Additionally, our participants' inadequate knowledge and training in librarianship hinders them to accomplish librarians' professional functions. Thus, without relevant training, full range of library services cannot be offered (Godfree & Neilson, 2018), and would lead to bigger concerns such as the problem of cataloguing. Our participants admitted that they found it difficult to classify books because they did not possess the cataloguing skills required from a professional librarian. This was also affirmed in a similar study which revealed that most of the resources in Tanzanian school libraries were not catalogued and classified, but were just scattered on the tables and shelves (Benard & Dulle, 2014).

In addition, our participants' lack of knowledge and training in library management led to a dysfunctional library, since the school library they were managing was just regarded as a store room and a past time place for teachers to sleep and eat during their vacant time. This same scenario was also experienced in Iloilo City wherein it was reported that a school library was converted into classrooms and teachers' lounge (Locsin, 2015). This is also similar to Namibia, where libraries were also regarded as small corners more suited to being storerooms and could not contribute meaningfully to a learning program (Shatona & Namibia Library and Information Council, 2007). When teachers and library in charge do not have ample training and background in library organization, school libraries just become random collection of books which offer no attraction to children and remain largely under-used (Douglas and Wilkinson, 2010). Thus, the quality of library service depends on the quality of personnel that school libraries have.

Clearly, the adversities recently discussed could be highly viewed through the Performance Management Theory (Gilbert, 1978) which explains the strong relationship between competence and performance. Indeed, library paraprofessionals' different competencies and specialization affect their performance in the library, as well as the quality of service they provided to the students.

Library paraprofessionals also recognized that the law Republic Act 9246 (2004), which governs the policies and standards for school libraries was poorly implemented. This was highly seen by the inadequate support and lack of prioritization from the school administrators. Besides, instead of prioritizing school libraries, which are supposedly one of the basic needs of the learners, school administrators were only focus on the school curriculum, new programs, and infrastructures. In Calabar, a



school library development research revealed that school administrators would rather fund visible projects such as construction of additional classrooms rather than stock the library with needed relevant materials (Petters & Otong, 2012).

Additionally, poor implementation of the law was also observed by the school administrators' lack of recognition of the importance of libraries and librarians. Unfortunately, this was also experienced in developing countries where school libraries are poorly neglected (Dzandu, 2007). Concrete examples of this are the education policymakers in Australia who failed to recognize the importance of school librarians in government schools (Godfree & Neilson, 2018). Specifically, the Philippine government does not consider public school libraries a priority in the allocation of resources and improvements in school libraries (Totanes, as cited in Batiancila, 2007). This concern became a barrier in providing the library resources for the students as these were not purchased, and remain unavailable to the students. Similarly, this issue was also experienced in places like Uganda (Magara & Batambuze, 2009), Namibia (Nengomasha, Utoni, & Yule, 2012), United Kingdom (All-Party Parliamentary Group of Education, 2011), and Ghana (Agyekum & Filson, 2012). Nigerian school libraries were also denied the attention they deserve because focus was not placed on libraries and on developing their collection which led to under resourced, understaffed and underutilized school libraries (Fasola, 2015). Thus, challenges to school libraries evidently aroused from weak appreciation and inadequate knowledge among policy-makers and educators about the role of the school library (Hart & Zinn, 2007; Ikojo-Odongo, 2008; World Bank, 2008).

Since the law, Republic Act 9246 (2004), was poorly implemented, school library resources were poorly developed. Inadequate library resources were also reported in the studies of Benard and Dulle (2014), Adebamow (2011), Adeyemi and Olaleye (2010), Udo-Ilomechine (2008), Fasola (2015), Idiegbeyan-Ose and Okoedion (2012), and Ajegbomogun and Salaam (2011). In addition, inadequate library physical facilities were also the result of poor implementation of the said law. Such examples were mutilated flooring, shortage of tables and chairs, bookshelves, bookstands, small space, and even unavailability of electricity. The lack of sitting facilities such as tables and chairs were observed in some school libraries in Tanzania (Benard & Dulle, 2014). Also, majority of the school libraries in Oyo State were situated in part of classrooms, not making the reading areas spacious enough for students to read in (Adeyemi & Olaleye, 2010). Likewise, school libraries in Nigeria also shared the same sentiments (Ajegbomogun & Salaam, 2011).

Lastly, the absence of training opportunities added up to our participants' adversities. As a matter of fact, seminars and trainings were not funded and supported by the school administrators. This made them discouraged to attend trainings and seminars related to library management. It also disheartened them knowing that if they do attend seminars; they have to pay for them at their own expenses. It was reported in a study that the development of library management skills in teachers who were assigned to school libraries was neglected (Mgina & Lwehabura, 2011).

### ***Coping Mechanisms of Library Paraprofessionals***

In coping with all the endeavours managing the school library, library paraprofessionals developed a support system and kept a positive attitude towards their work.

Library paraprofessionals have developed a support system for the library. This certain coping mechanism could be best viewed on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), specifically by the problem-focused strategies which focus on the use of the resources available in the environment such as support from other people. Our participants' development of support system includes their collaboration with the students, teachers, parents, profit and non-profit organizations in developing a functional library. For instance, library paraprofessionals collaborated with the students by forming students' club or organization such as the book lover's club. Members of this organization were



students who helped in the organization and arrangement of books in the library. Students also helped the library financially by contributing small amount of money for the welfare of the library. Aside from this, their co-teachers also helped in developing the library's collection. Support from the parent organization known as PTA (Parent Teachers Association), profit and non-profit organizations unexpectedly knocked at their doors in a form of book donations. Some school libraries in Washington, D.C. were also supported by the Parent Teachers Association (PTA), as well as from other community members (Sonnen, 2008).

Furthermore, library paraprofessionals also supported the library personally. This helped them contribute to strengthen the support system of the library. This personal assistance includes providing the library with personal monetary aid, classifying the books by subject and conducting library inventory. This could be explained by the Theory of Resourcefulness (Zauszniewski, 2006), which emphasizes the idea of self-help skills that constitute personal resourcefulness. Hence, library paraprofessionals' self-help skills contributed a lot in school library improvement.

Moreover, upon wrestling with the different struggles along their way, library paraprofessionals have maintained and kept several positive attitudes. This could be best viewed on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping specifically the emotion-focused coping strategy, which explains that persons could create positive meanings by focusing on personal growth and employ specific efforts in order to master, tolerate, reduce or minimize stressful events (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In addition, this coping could also be supported by Self-efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977), which highly affect a person's cognitive and emotions. Hence, library paraprofessionals' positive thinking and attitudes like acceptance of poor situation in school libraries, as well as their patience, love for work and faith helped them surpass the trials they went through. These greatly helped them deal with the adversities they had faced.

#### ***Insights to School Administrators, Fellow Library Paraprofessionals, Librarians and Library Associations, and to the Academe in General***

Library paraprofessionals shared that the adversities in managing school libraries could be best overcome by making the library a priority, keeping a positive attitude, and collaborating with library organizations.

Library paraprofessionals wished that school administrators would prioritize and give due importance to the libraries and librarians. This means giving their full support both morally and financially. Also, with hopeful hearts, the participants yearned that administrators must not take for granted the presence of libraries in schools, and that the library must be the heart of the school so that students would be encouraged to do well in their academic endeavours, as well as persevere to practice in using the library resources. With optimism, they are looking forward that administrators will realize that school libraries significantly contribute to students' reading and comprehension (Gretes, 2013; Kachel & Lance, 2013; Krashen, Lee, & McQuillan, 2010; New York Comprehensive Center, 2011; Pentchoukov, 2013; Word Bank, 2008), to the curriculum as well as to the teaching-learning process (Fakomogbon, Bada, & Omiola, 2012; Francis, Lance, & Lietzau, 2010; Lance, Marcia, & Schwarz, 2009; Trilling, 2010; Yusuf, 2014;), and to the overall academic achievement of students (Achterman, 2008; Francis, Lance, & Lietzau, 2010; Fraser, 2013; Gilmore-See, 2010; Gretes, 2013; Kachel, 2013; Marzoli & Papa, 2017; Mullis, et al., 2012; PA School Library Project et al., 2012; Scholastics, 2008; Todd, Gordon, & Lu, 2012).

By prioritizing the library, administrators could give a room for the school library in their overall planning. Also, the financial needs of the library could be included in all plans of the school administrators, as well as in the school program and overall DepEd program. And with all positivity, library paraprofessionals anticipated that financial support for school libraries will be included by the administrators as one of their top priorities.





Administrators could give their full support to the library paraprofessionals in terms of seminars and trainings related to library management. Hence, our participants were hoping to finally get the chance to attend seminars and trainings because this is one of the important things they needed the most in order for them to learn the basics of library management. Similarly in Tanzania, the need for training in library management of teachers who were assigned in school libraries is also needed (Mgina & Lwehabura, 2011). Hence, the need for continuous skills development for library paraprofessionals who are appointed to the library without any specialized training (Magara & Batambuze, 2009) should be properly addressed by the school administrators.

Prioritizing the library means improving its resources and facilities such as having an internet connection, functional and accessible library, and sustainable library collection. Congruently, the need for current and up-to-date information resources in Tanzania was also recommended (Benard & Dulle, 2014). After all, these improvements will certainly contribute a lot to the educational process (David-West & Bassey, 2017), and to the students' success in school and beyond (Strong, 2014).

And lastly, in making the library as one of the administrators' top priorities, they must hire a full time librarian. Hence, the Department of Education (DepEd) should consider the creation of item for school librarians in the public schools in the country (Cabonero, 2008). This is also true in Tanzania where the employment of qualified and trained librarians in school libraries was a necessity (Benard & Dulle, 2014), since librarians contribute to the overall effectiveness of school libraries (Todd, Gordon, & Lu, 2012). Hence, access to qualified school library professionals like librarians is the most critical condition of an effective school library program (IFLA, 2015).

In addition, having and keeping a positive attitude is one important insight participants shared especially to their fellow library paraprofessionals. For them, it is a must for library paraprofessionals to have the positive attitude such as being resourceful and innovative especially in developing and improving the school library they are handling. Also, having a positive attitude entails having the initiative to learn tasks and ideas related to the management of school library. These will give them an avenue to improve the library collection through solicitation and donations and will help them make the library functional and effective.

Loving and valuing work are positive virtues which library paraprofessionals should live by. They must give value to their work as a person in charge of the library through honesty and dedication. This means that library paraprofessionals should religiously do their tasks and ensure that the students effectively utilize the resources and materials in the library. Also, devoting one's time, no matter how little it is, is another way to show one's love and value to the work. Thus, devoting time for the library is as important as devoting time for one's class. Hence, library paraprofessionals, no matter how hectic their schedules can be, must learn how to manage their time wisely.

When challenged with difficult tasks along their way, it is a must for library paraprofessionals to develop a strong connection with the library professionals. This means that library paraprofessionals must strongly collaborate with the licensed librarians and library associations as they are more knowledgeable in the field of librarianship. Thus, library associations could help them in terms of the proper processing of library materials and the possible activities and programs intended for the school library. Hence, this action could be best explained by the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), specifically the problem-focused strategy which highly focused on finding a solution to a problem by using the available resources in the environment such as support from other people like support from professionals, community organizations, family members, and friends.

Licensed librarians and library associations must also have the willingness and dedication to help library paraprofessionals in battling the adversities they faced in the world which is totally unaligned



to their chosen profession. Through their willingness and dedication to collaborate, they could help library paraprofessionals in strengthening the support system of the library. For instance, creating a joint library combining school libraries and public libraries, in order to provide services and meet the needs of the patrons in both schools and public context (Kluever & Finley, 2012; Swedish Arts Council, 2010). Thus, library paraprofessionals also look forward that the same collaborative efforts will be realized in their respective communities.

**Limitation of the Study.** Our study was conducted only on a small size of population within the provinces of Davao del Sur and Davao Occidental as there were only few schools in the provinces which have actual functional school libraries. Other schools do not have libraries at all.

**Implications of the Study.** Based on our study's results, library paraprofessionals, even if they are not librarians by profession, could still cope with their adversities in managing a school library by developing a library support system through collaboration with the students, teachers, principals, non-profit organizations, and most especially with the librarians, as well as with the different library organizations. Keeping a positive attitude of acceptance, patience, love for work and faith could also help them surpass the trials they are going through.

Our study also calls for awareness among school administrators who are in the Department of Education (DepEd) to seriously look into the issue of school libraries in the public sector for the full and strong implementation of the law RA 9246 which governs the policies and standards set for all types of libraries in the Philippines. Hence, they could strengthen this law by making school libraries as one of their top priorities. Such priorities are providing adequate support for the library paraprofessionals in seminars and trainings related to library management, improving the library's physical facilities, developing library's sustainable resources, and most especially creating plantilla items for the position of a full time librarian both in the public secondary and elementary schools.

Librarians could also help fully implement the Republic Act 9246 by cooperating and collaborating with the different library organizations in advocating for the strong implementation of the said law in the Philippines, specifically in the public sector.

For future researchers, they could conduct studies dealing with the actions taken by the school administrators in solving problems concerning school libraries in the public sector. They could also conduct researches on the quality of teaching of the library paraprofessionals in the public sector, knowing that they are teaching, and at the same time managing a library. Researchers could also widen our study regionally; as this was only limited in the provinces of Davao Occidental and Davao del Sur. Lastly, a tracer study could be created in order to determine the exact number of functional public school libraries in the country.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Managing a school library has proved to be a constant challenge for library paraprofessionals, as it necessitates skills and competencies that are not aligned with their chosen profession. Their performance in fulfilling library tasks was affected since they wrestled with several adversities like heavy workloads, lack of knowledge and training in library management, poor implementation of the law, and absence of training opportunities. Nonetheless, these adversities never shut them down, instead, they successfully coped it with through the support from teachers, students, parent organization, profit and non-profit organizations. They also dealt with their adversities by staying optimistic and cultivating positive attitudes of acceptance, patience, love for work and faith. These coping mechanisms may not be that much yet; these have contributed a lot in dealing with their concerns in managing the school library. These also set as examples for the other library paraprofessionals in overcoming the same adversities.



Above all else, library paraprofessionals' difficulties still depend primarily on their willingness to become the strangers who will strongly battle with adversities in the profession not known to them.

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