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Excellence
Community
Apostleship

EDITORIAL POLICY

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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; Petterrs & 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 (Achterman, 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 1 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 akoa, 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, *"Nagsolict 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 grievingly 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 superindentents."* (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 akoa 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 (Batiancila, 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 (Petterrs & 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, Uutoni, & 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 wresting 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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INFLUENCE OF INFORMATION SKILLS AND MEDIA LITERACY INSTRUCTION TO MISINFORMATION EVALUATION SKILLS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Accurate information is vital to the lives of every student. Thus, being able to distinguish between correct and erroneous information is a necessity. Hence, this descriptive-correlation research aimed to determine whether information skills and media literacy instruction can significantly influence the misinformation evaluation skills. The researchers administered adapted and patterned survey questionnaires to one hundred forty-one (141) BLIS college students from Regions XI and XII. Results revealed that students-respondents have high proficiency in information skills, namely computer skills, information literacy skills, and browsing and navigation skills. They have also received outstanding media literacy instruction, and they are highly skilful in evaluating and identifying misinformation. Moreover, using Multiple Linear Regression Analysis, findings revealed that both of the two independent variables, namely Information Skills and Media Literacy Instruction, can significantly influence the respondents' misinformation evaluation skills. These findings serve as basis to further strengthen the students' information skills, and the media literacy instruction as these variables positively affect college students' skills in evaluating misinformation.

***Keywords**: Library and information science, Misinformation, Fake news, Descriptive-correlation, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Accurate, reliable, and complete information is vital to the success of each one of us. Specifically, in the academe, information is pivotal because faculty and students use information daily in every way possible, in their various academic endeavours (Reid-Smith, 2012; Kumah, 2015). Information also helps in attaining effectiveness in educational systems (Kumah, 2015). However, with the rise of misinformation, the academic circle is concerned.

Information consumers like students have difficulty in distinguishing real or fake information. Stanford University conducted a study from middle school to college and found out that students have a hard time identifying real and unreal stories (Shellenbarger, 2016). Moreover, they have difficulty differentiating quality information sources from questionable ones (Stecula, 2017). In addition, they are most likely to trust what they read on social media without checking and verifying the credibility of the information and its source (Safieddine, Dordevic, & Pourghomi, 2017). What happened in Mindanao, specifically Region XI is a proof of the said findings. It was evident that many people (educated or not) were misled by the false tsunami alert, after the 6.3 magnitude earthquake had struck the said region. El Rayess, et al. (2018) also noted that students might be well-versed in technology, the internet, and social media. However, their skills in assessing information and identifying fake, inaccurate, and deceptive

sources are still questionable. These pieces of evidence affirmed that students are easily fooled and tricked by misinformation.

Due to the vast proliferation of information with the advent of technology, it is difficult to determine what is real and not. Thus, this study came to light to determine if the information skills and media literacy instruction can help students effectively identify misinformation. Since there has been no research conducted in the said area about how information skills and media literacy instruction influence the evaluation of misinformation among college students, this research attempts to fill the literature gap. The study's findings will also serve as a basis to create an effective media literacy instruction to develop the library science students' information skills as they will become information professionals in the future wherein they will play a significant role in educating the next generation.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the Seven Pillars of Information Skills Model developed by The Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL, 1999).

Information Skills Model explains that information skills signify competent students and information literate person. These seven pillars of information skills are (1) the ability to recognize the need for information; (2) ability to distinguish ways of addressing gap; (3) ability to construct strategies for locating; (4) ability to identify and access; (5) ability to compare and evaluate; (6) ability to organize, apply and communicate; (7) ability to synthesize and create. This model emphasized that skills in higher education is a combination of information technology skills and information skills. It demonstrates the importance of both information literacy and digital literacy in becoming an information literate person who can effectively use information technology, and at the same time, can think critically about the entire information enterprise.

In the context of this study, it emphasized that both information skills and media literacy instruction are essential in evaluating misinformation. When an information literate person possessed the seven pillars of information skills and has received effective media literacy instruction, they can effectively compare and evaluate information at hand. Moreover, the media literacy instruction helps them become digital literate; hence, they would be able to know how to interpret media messages and evaluate media content. Employing information skills and media literacy instruction, a college student can successfully evaluate mediated information such as misinformation.

Figure 1 shows the study's conceptual framework that depicts how information skills and media literacy instruction are associated with misinformation evaluation skills. The independent variables are information skills and media literacy instruction that serve as bases to influence misinformation evaluation skills.

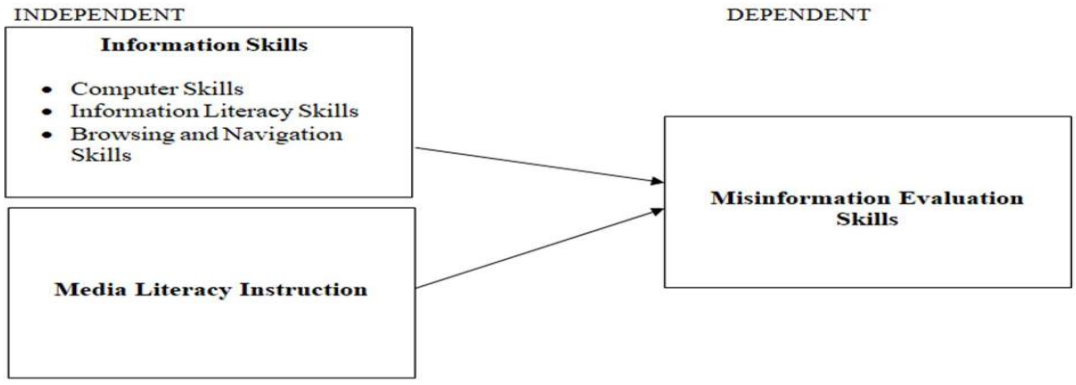

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of the study

Statement of the problem

The study aimed to determine the influence of information skills and media literacy instruction on misinformation evaluation skills among college students.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of misinformation evaluation skills of college students?
2. What is the level of information skills of college students in terms of:
   - 2.1 Computer skills;
   - 2.2 Information literacy skills; and
   - 2.3 Browsing and navigation skills?
3. What is the extent of media literacy instruction of college students?
4. Can the level of information skills and the extent of media literacy instruction significantly influence the college students' misinformation evaluation skills?

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho_1 The level of information skills and extent of media literacy instruction cannot significantly influence the college students' misinformation evaluation skills.

Review of Related Literature

This section presents thoroughly researched and verified information covering the information skills, media literacy instruction, and misinformation evaluation skills.

Information Skills

Nowadays, technological advancements are rapid and information environments are quickly changing. Hence, students must be equipped with skills to surf the ocean of information. It is essential to develop information skills to cope with today's digital problems like misinformation (Keshavarz, 2014). Skills such as ability to locate, access correctly, critically evaluate, and use the information are necessary for lifelong learning (Thanuskodi, 2019), and in using today's electronic information resources (Israel & Nsibirwa, 2018). Moreover, information skills are crucial for detecting misinformation. People with better information skills evaluate the information's quality before they believe it, while people with lower information skills trust the data quickly (Lucassen, et al., 2012). Thus, it is evident that information skills are necessary for the critical appraisal of the retrieved information.

In this study, there are three indicators of the information skills variable. These include computer skills, information literacy skills, and browsing and navigation skills. The following literature and studies discuss each indicator's importance to the information consumers, particularly students.

Computer Skills. Computer skills, as indicator of information skills, are considered essential in students' academic life. Results revealed that the higher the students' computer skills, the better their use of the internet and electronic resources (Adeagbo, 2011; Ismaila, 2019; Israel, 2015). While the students with inadequate computer skills lead to not fully retrieving e-resources (Abubakar & Adetimirin, 2013). Moreover, computer literate students perform better academically than those non-computer literate, because computer skills enhance the academic performance of students (Aitokhuehi & Ojogho, 2014).

Information Literacy Skills. As the second indicator of information skills, information literacy skills help information consumers like students find, seek, and use information rightfully. A study on banking personnel in Ogun State, Nigeria, revealed that having information literacy skills facilitates them to seek and identify the information they need, find and identify information sources, retrieve data from relevant sources, and evaluate the retrieved information (Bello, et al., 2016). Likewise, a study at Lagos State revealed that information literacy skills significantly predict medical students' use of information sources. They find the use of print and e-resources easy because they found information literacy skills to

be high (Akpovire, et al., 2019). Adeleke and Emeahara (2016) recorded the same findings that there is a significant relationship between information literacy skills and electronic resource usage among the University of Ibadan's postgraduate students. Moreover, information literacy skills influence undergraduate students' electronic information resources in Nigeria (Ismaila, 2019). These findings implied that information literacy skills help one to become expert in locating, accessing and evaluating quality electronic information.

Browsing and Navigation Skills. Browsing and navigation skills as the third indicator of information skills enable an individual to expertly browse and navigate the internet in accessing information using different browsers and search engines. Yebowaah (2018) found that students' ability to access the internet positively influences their academic performance. Browsing and navigation skills represent fluency on the internet and its various features and functions. In contrast, when a person does not possess the necessary skills in browsing and navigating the internet, they would have a difficult time working in today's era. The study in Delta State University Distance Learning Centers revealed that some respondents could not navigate and access relevant information and download course work materials because of the low level of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) literacy skills (Oyeniran & Olajide, 2016). This result signifies that ICT literacy skills such as internet browsing and navigation skills are essential in seeking, downloading/uploading, and using relevant information from online resources to improve one's academic performance.

Overall, information skills, which comprise computer skills, information literacy skills, and browsing and navigation skills, are fundamental in students' academic life since they help them perform better academically. Comparatively, information skills are essential in evaluating and distinguishing quality and relevant information. These skills help the students critically evaluate the quality and credibility of information before trusting and using the obtained information for their assignments, research, and personal interests.

Media Literacy Instruction . Today, information consumers access their information through complex combinations of text, images, and sounds. To be knowledgeable and skilful in navigating this complex media environment is inevitability (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2017). Hence, media literacy instruction is an essential tool. Media literacy instruction refers to the education or teaching that trains and teaches students to use media devices properly, understand media languages, and create, use, present, and evaluate media content. This media literacy instruction is a curriculum that introduces learners to engage in the media critically (Leaning, 2019). Media literacy instruction helps to develop critical thinking and active participation in the media culture. The goal is to make the students become independent learners by teaching them to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2017).

Media literacy instruction has several benefits to students in their academic endeavours. One significant advantage is that the said instruction enables students to become independent learners. A study in Ateneo de Manila Grade School revealed that the Media Instruction Program is an excellent intervention to teach students to become independent users of information (Dela Cruz, 2016). It was also shown in the survey that college students who had taken a media literacy course had significantly higher levels of media literacy compared to those who did not take it. It was further revealed by the said survey that students have more excellent knowledge on current news and events compared to those students who did not take media literacy instruction (Maksl, et al., 2017). The said instruction also develops the information consumers' skills to distinguish fact from opinion (Gallagher & Magid, 2017). Thus, media literacy instruction enables an individual to make sound and reasonable decisions as it develops one's ability to analyze and evaluate the information, may it be in the aspect of personal, academic, or professional.

Moreover, media literacy instruction teaches students how to effectively use Google and social media platforms in their daily lives (Burkhardt, 2017). It also develops both the students' primary and more advanced competencies to obtain accurate and quality information (Quijano, 2019). Media literacy instruction helps students access and use the stream of media messages with accuracy and quality, since media literacy instruction develops their ability to critically analyze and evaluate media content and messages (Hobbs & Moore, 2013; Rogow, 2015). Thus, media literacy instruction is an essential strategy in combating the spread of misinformation (Burkhardt, 2017). Bates, et al. (2017) affirmed that information consumers could easily recognize fake information by developing media literacy skills. These statements proved that media literacy instruction is inextricably relevant to increasing students' literacy and the ability to evaluate information and information sources (El Rayess, et al., 2018). These pieces of evidence affirmed that media literacy instruction will help one to effectively analyze and critically evaluate between real and fake information.

Misinformation Evaluation Skills

The abundance of misinformation has been evident in recent years. As seen nowadays, misinformation is a problem in our societies and media environments (Alemanno, 2018). Misinformation is inaccurate information, which might be a result of an honest mistake (Walsh, 2010). It may appear like real news, but it contains erroneous information (Bates, et al., 2017).

Hence, skills are pivotal to be able to identify misinformation. It is vital for students to effectively criticize or assess information's credibility and other information sources (Schulten, 2015). However, studies revealed that students lack skills in evaluating misinformation. It has been attested in a study by Negi (2018) wherein there is a significant skill gap among respondents to distinguish between real and fabricated news. Moreover, a study by the Stanford Graduate School of Education revealed that more than 80% of middle and high school students could not recognize between real and fake information (Gallagher & Magid, 2017). Students who lack the skills to evaluate and acknowledge misinformation lead them to believe and trust phony details, resulting in poor decision-making (Farmer, 2019). Thus, the rise of misinformation across the internet, remarkably calls everyone to obtain skills in misinformation evaluation (Kiernan, 2017).

The reviewed literature explored the importance of media literacy instruction and information skills in effectively evaluating the stream of information. In other words, by possessing the knowledge and skills to assess the reliability and quality of the information, students may be able to critically appraise the information at hand, whether it is accurate or not. However, it is stated in the reviewed literature that students are easily deceived by misinformation due to lack of evaluation skills. Thus, in this context, the researchers want to determine whether information skills and media literacy instruction can significantly influence the skills in detecting misinformation among the college students.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlation design. According to Calderon (2000), this research method involves describing, recording, analyzing, and interpreting conditions and relationships between non-manipulative variables. Correlation design measures the relationship between two variables in which they are related (McLeod, 2008). Correlation design is best to check if an increase or decrease in one variable corresponds to an increase or decrease in the other variable. This study described the relationship between information skills and media literacy instruction to college students' misinformation evaluation skills.

Respondents

The respondents of this study were the college students taking up Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) in Region XI and Region XII, the School Year 2019-2020, specifically Cor

Jesu College, Inc., Notre Dame of Dadiangas University, Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges, Southern Christian College, and the University of Southern Mindanao respectively. The researchers chose them as the respondents since they were exposed and avid users of social media platforms. Besides that, they have information literacy and media literacy as part of their curriculum, which are necessary to become future information specialists. There were nine (9) respondents from Cor Jesu College, Inc.; 11 respondents from Notre Dame of Dadiangas University; three (3) from Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges; 63 from Southern Christian College; and 55 from University of Southern Mindanao; with an overall total of 141 respondents.

Sampling Procedure

This study employed universal or census sampling. A universal or census sampling technique means including the entire population if the whole population is tiny. A census sample gathered data on every member of the population. This sampling technique enables researchers to collect accurate data for it takes the entire population into account (Paredes, 2017). In this study, the researchers employed a universal sampling procedure as it covered the total population of BLIS students of each institution.

Measures

This study used research instruments that were well structured. It consists of three sets. The first set of the questionnaire is the Information Skills Questionnaire, adapted and patterned from the American Library Association (ALA) and Old Dominion University. The second set of the questionnaire was from Simons, Meeus, and T'Sas' (2017) Questionnaire on Assessing Media Literacy Education. The third questionnaire was self-constructed and patterned from three different research articles of Stein-Smith's (2017) How to Recognize Misinformation, El Rayess, et al. (2018) Fake news judgment: the case of undergraduate students at Notre Dame University-Louaize, Lebanon, and Constitutional Rights Foundation's (2017) Understanding Fake News. These three sets of questionnaires were subjected to pilot-testing and validation by three experts for content validity and reliability. Each set of questionnaires got a Cronbach Alpha value of .934 for Computer Skills, .948 for Information Literacy Skills, and .932 for Browsing and Navigation Skills for the first set; .933 for the second set; and .893 for the third set, respectively.

Procedure

The researchers undertook the following procedures to investigate the study: First, the researchers secured an approval letter addressed to the School President of each institution to conduct the study. After securing the approved letter, the researchers coordinated with the BLIS Program Head to distribute and retrieve the survey questionnaires to the target respondents, for the second semester, SY 2019-2020. Lastly, data gathered were tallied and interpreted as a basis for analysis and findings.

Ethical considerations

In conducting the survey, the researchers ensured that the respondents voluntarily participated in the study, and that no harm inflicted to the respondents. The survey questionnaire used in this study did not ask for any personal information from the respondents to ensure the anonymity of the data. Also, the gathered data were treated with confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the respondents were analyzed and interpreted with the use of the following statistical tools: Mean Score was employed to determine and establish the mean scores on the level of information skills in terms of computer skills, information literacy skills, and browsing and navigation skills, the extent of media literacy instruction, and level of misinformation evaluation skills. Mean Score is the most common measure of central tendency and refers to the average value of a group of numbers (Asaad, 2008; Syke, Gani, & Vally, 2016). Multiple Regression Analysis was utilized to test whether information skills and media literacy instruction significantly influence the respondents'

misinformation evaluation skills. Regression analysis is a powerful method of analyzing a dependent variable's variability by resorting to information available on one or more independent variables (Asaad, 2008; Lund Research, 2018). When two or more independent variables were used, the analysis referred to multiple regression analysis.

Results

The researchers presented the results of the study in four parts, namely level of misinformation evaluation skills, level of information skills in terms of computer skills, information literacy skills, and browsing and navigation skills, the extent of media literacy instruction, the significant influence of information skills and media literacy instruction to misinformation evaluation skills.

Level of misinformation evaluation skills

Table 1 presents the data on the extent of media literacy instruction by the Bachelor of Library and Information Science students. Shown are the mean scores of the respondents with a corresponding descriptive rating and verbal interpretation.

Table 1. Level of misinformation evaluation skills

Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
4.00	High	At this level, the respondents have proficiency in checking, comparing, and visiting other reliable information sources in evaluating information.

Results revealed that the mean Score of the students-respondents is 4.00, which is in the high descriptive rating. It signifies that the respondents at this level have the proficiency in checking, comparing, and visiting reliable information sources in evaluating information.

Level of information skills

Table 2 presents the data on information skills, including computer skills, information literacy skills, and browsing and navigation skills by the Bachelor of Library and Information Science students. Shown are the mean scores of the respondents with a corresponding descriptive rating and verbal interpretation.

Table 2. Level of information skills

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
Computer Skills	4.19	High	The respondents at this level have proficiency in computer skills.
Information Literacy Skills	4.03	High	The respondents at this level have proficiency in information literacy skills.
Browsing and Navigation Skills	4.12	High	The respondents at this level have proficiency in browsing and navigation skills.
Overall Mean	4.11	High	The respondents are proficient in computer skills, information literacy skills, and browsing and navigation skills.

Table 2 shows the mean scores of each indicator of information skills wherein computer skills got 4.19, followed by browsing and navigation skills with 4.12, then information literacy skills with a mean score of 4.03. Further, the overall mean score is 4.11, which is a high descriptive rating. The students-respondents have proficiency in computer skills, information literacy skills, and browsing and navigation skills.

The extent of media literacy instruction

Table 3 presents the data on the extent of media literacy instruction by the Bachelor of Library and Information Science students. Shown are the mean scores of the respondents with a corresponding descriptive rating and verbal interpretation.

Table 3. The extent of media literacy instruction

Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
4.06	High	The instruction given very satisfactorily increased the media and information skills of the students.

Results show that the mean score of the students-respondents is 4.06, which has a high descriptive rating. It means that media literacy instruction is very satisfactorily, which consequently increased their media and information skills.

A significant influence on information skills and media literacy instruction to misinformation evaluation skills

Table 4 presents the significant influence on information skills and media literacy instruction to misinformation evaluation skills by the BLIS college students with their corresponding regression and beta coefficient values.

Table 4. A significant influence on information skills and media literacy instruction to misinformation evaluation skills

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.798	.353		2.262	.025
	Information Skills	.405	.106	.321	3.812	.000
	Media Literacy Instruction	.379	.085	.378	4.484	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Misinformation Evaluation Skills
b. Anova Table: Sig. Value = .000
c. Model Summary: R2 = .396
d. Model Summary: Adjusted R2 = .387
f. Anova Table: DF =140

Table 4 shows that when regression equation MES = β0 (constant) + β1IS + β2MLI + €1 was tested using multiple linear regression analysis, results from the ANOVA table show that the sig-value is .000, which is found to be below the .05 level of significance set for this study. It signifies that overall, the model is significant and that the model fits the data. It also indicates a substantial relationship between the three variables being studied: information skills, media literacy instruction, and misinformation evaluation skills.

Moreover, when looking at each of the independent variables' regression coefficients, both were significant with p-value =.000. It signifies that the study's two independent variables, namely information skills and media literacy instruction, had a positive relationship with the college students' misinformation evaluation skills. With these results, the researchers hypothesized that the respondents' information skills and media literacy instruction matter in identifying and evaluating misinformation. Furthermore, the Coefficient Table results show that the beta coefficient value of information skills is equal to .405, while media literacy instruction has a beta value equal to .379. Thus, the estimated regression model can be mathematically presented as:

MES= .798 (constant) + .405 (Information Skills) + .379 (Media Literacy Instruction) + €i

Furthermore, as manifested in the Model summary table, it shows that the value of Adjusted R Square is equal to .387. It signifies that the explanatory and predictive power of significant independent variables is low because it could account for 38.7 percent of the misinformation evaluation skills variation.

Discussion

Investigating the influence of information skills, media literacy instruction, and misinformation evaluation skills among college students could be essential for students, librarians, and faculty. The results of the study could increase their awareness vis-à-vis these variables.

Level of misinformation evaluation skills

As to the level of misinformation evaluation skills, the result revealed that it is in the high rating. It signifies that the respondents have proficiency in checking, comparing, and visiting reliable information sources in evaluating information. This finding agrees with the result of a survey by Druckman and Vogt (2020) that students performed better on identifying facts and opinions, false stories, hate speech and demonstrated a more profound knowledge of the news media sector. On the contrary, Negi (2018) stated a significant skill gap among research respondents to distinguish between real and fabricated news. Moreover, the students' proficiency in evaluating information is limited and unsystematic. They seemed surprised and pleased when discussing the searching strategies and accessing and checking sites for authority, currency, or relevance (Al-Qallaf & Al-Mutairi, 2016). Gallagher and Magid (2017) also affirmed in the study conducted at Stanford Graduate School of Education, which revealed that more than 80% of the students could not recognize real and fake information. However, this study's result cannot reconcile with the contradictory findings because this study was administered to the students who have received highly-effective media literacy instruction and are well-honed information skills. These two variables are the core subjects of the LIS program. In contrast, the study conducted by Al-Qallaf and Al-Mutairi (2016) and Gallagher and Magid (2017) was administered to non-BLIS students, who were primary and middle-high school students, respectively.

Level of information skills

As to the level of information skills, the result found out that it is in the high descriptive rating, which means that the students-respondents have proficiency in computer skills, information literacy skills, and browsing and navigation skills. This finding agrees with the study of Malliari, Korobili, and Togia (2012) that LIS students have high information skills in terms of computer competence and efficacy. Moreover, LIS students have high information skills in terms of information literacy skills and browsing and navigation skills. They are comfortable developing search strategies, choosing search terms, and finding relevant resources in libraries and the Web (Saunders et al., 2015). However, this finding contradicts the result of a study conducted on the undergraduate students at the University of Mines and Technology (UMaT), Tarkwa, Ghana, wherein findings revealed that the levels of information literacy skills and browsing and searching skills among the first-year students were low and below standard (Kavi, et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, this contradictory finding cannot be overemphasized since it was conducted on first-year undergraduate students, not specifically from the LIS program. This study was administered to the well-equipped students with information skills in terms of computer skills, information literacy skills, and browsing and navigation skills since the LIS program's focus is to produce information skilled/expert librarians. Saunders et al. (2015) stated that the primary focus of LIS programs is developing information skills to navigate the vast world of information.

Extent of media literacy instruction

Concerning the extent of media literacy instruction, it is also rated as high, which indicates that media literacy instruction given to the students was very satisfactory, which consequently increased their media and information skills. It agrees with the finding at Stony Brook University that revealed the effectiveness of media literacy course, which helped the college students have significantly higher media literacy levels (Maksl, et al., 2017). Also, the result revealed that those students who have not taken the media literacy program have low media literacy and have insufficient knowledge of current events and news (Maksl, et al., 2017). Moreover, the study of Dela Cruz (2016) found out an increase in the number of passers after going through media instruction sessions. Hence, it confirms that students have a better understanding of critically comprehending and analyzing media messages than students who did not receive instruction in media literacy (Jacobson, 2017).

Significant influence on information skills and media literacy instruction to misinformation evaluation skills

The study revealed a significant relationship between the three variables. Findings revealed that two predicting variables significantly influenced misinformation evaluation skills among the college students, namely Information Skills and Media Literacy Instruction. Moreover, the coefficient value of Information Skills, which is .405, indicates that holding all other variables in the regression constant, its coefficient indicates that for every one unit change in the level of information skills would give a corresponding .405 unit increase in the level of misinformation evaluation skills among the college students. It entails that the higher the level of information skills, the higher it would be to misinformation evaluation skills. The low positive beta coefficient with a p-value of .000 for information skills confirms the empirical findings, claiming a reasonably positive correlation between information skills and misinformation evaluation skills among the respondents. It signifies that when the students-respondents' information skills increase, misinformation evaluation skills will also increase. Hence, the two variables have a significant linear correlation.

Possessing adequate information skills enables students to detect misinformation. It was revealed that information consumers with better information skills evaluate the quality of the information before they believe, while those with more inadequate information skills trust the data quickly (Lucassen, et al., 2012). Therefore, it was affirmed that the higher the information skills, the higher it would also be for misinformation evaluation skills. Hence, developing information skills is essential to cope with today's digital problems (Keshavarz, 2014).

Moreover, concerning the Media Literacy Instruction, its coefficient value of .379 signifies that holding all other variables in the regression constant, its coefficient indicates that for every one unit change in the extent of media literacy instruction would give a corresponding .379 unit increase in the level of misinformation evaluation skills among the college students. It implies that the higher the extent of media literacy instruction, the higher it would be to misinformation evaluation skills. The low positive beta coefficient with a p-value of .000 for media literacy instruction confirms the empirical findings, claiming a reasonably positive correlation between media literacy instruction and misinformation evaluation skills among the respondents. It signifies that misinformation evaluation skills will increase when the students-respondents receive excellent and comprehensive media literacy instruction. Hence, the two variables have a significant linear correlation. Thus, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis.

This finding agrees with the other studies that media literacy instruction or education equips the students to interpret media messages critically. The said instruction helps the students to evaluate information with accuracy and quality (Hobbs & Moore, 2013; Rogow, 2015). Moreover, media literate students seem to do a better job of selecting good news (Maksl, et al., 2017). Further, by developing media literacy skills, students can easily recognize fake information (Bates, et al. (2017). It was also found that media literacy instruction highlighted fake information or news evaluation is the best strategy. It helps students become more media literate or skillful in evaluating misinformation to avoid misleading (Burkhardt, 2017). Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the much in-depth and comprehensive media literacy instruction to be given to the students, the more they become experts and skilful in misinformation evaluation.

In its entirety, however, the combined explanatory and predictive power of information skills and media literacy instruction is considered to be low as manifested in the value of Adjusted R Square, which is equal to .387, which indicates that the variations of the independent variable can explain around 38.7% of the variations of the dependent variable. The variations of the misinformation evaluation skills among college students can be explained by the variations of their level of information skills and media literacy instruction. The remaining 61.3% can be explained by other variables not included in the model.

Overall, the study's findings validate the anchored theory used in this study: the Seven Pillars of Information Skills Model. The significant influence of information skills and media literacy instruction can be best viewed and explained by this theory, which speculates that possessing the seven pillars of information skills and being able to critically process information as a product of the effectiveness of media literacy instruction can influence the skills in identification and evaluation of misinformation among college students.

Limitation of the Study

This study covered the level of information skills, extent of media literacy instruction, and misinformation evaluation skills among college students from the Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) program in Regions XI and XII. BLIS students were selected as respondents since their core subjects are heavily focused on information and media literacy.

In conducting the study, the researchers came across a limitation. All institutions in Davao City that offered BLIS program were excluded due to their strict research policy and long external research application processes. Thus, the researchers had difficulty conducting her investigation. Also, the analysis was only limited to the respondents' answers.

Conclusions

Due to the rapid spreading of misinformation online, the access to right information is in jeopardy. Hence, distinguishing fact and fake information is essential in students' lives. Based from the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that the students-respondents are highly skilful in evaluating the retrieved information. They can effectively identify fact or fake information because they possessed high information skills, as a result of a very satisfactory media literacy instruction conducted to them. This signifies that information skills and media literacy instruction did matter in evaluating information. Ultimately, students can win this battle of misinformation if they possessed information skills and received a highly effective and comprehensive media literacy instruction. In the end, it still lies in the hands of the teachers-librarians in honing the students' skills in accessing and using accurate, reliable, and complete information.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the researchers offered the following recommendations to heighten the levels of information skills, media literacy instruction and misinformation evaluation skills among college students. First, school administrators may support the LIS faculty and librarians by sending them

to seminars/training related to today's digital information to update their skills and knowledge. In this way, our LIS faculty and librarians can impart these newly-acquired knowledge and skills to the students. Second, LIS Faculty may intensify the classes concerning computers, browsing, navigation, and information literacy, subjects explicitly like reference and information sources, indexing and abstracting, and research subjects. Third, LIS Faculty and librarians may put emphasis the proper use of media devices, understand and evaluate media content, and accessing fact-checking sites, cross-referencing, etc., in their annual media literacy program. Fourth, college students may regularly practice their skills and experience from media literacy instruction by giving them more innovative and real-life exercises. Lastly, future researches may conduct a follow-up study to generate qualitative data regarding college students' information skills, media literacy instruction, and misinformation evaluation skills, to deeply find out how information skills and media literacy instruction help students in detecting misinformation.

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NO SIGNAL: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING CHALLENGES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

The growing underutilization of library resources and services has prompted colleges and universities to apply marketing strategies like social media to keep libraries relevant and responsive to their stakeholders' needs.This phenomenological study aimed to explore librarians' challenges and strategies in marketing academic libraries in Davao region using social media. Data were gathered through key informant interviews with nine librarians who were purposively selected based on the study's inclusion criteria. Results showed that social media marketing has become a trend among libraries and entails challenges. Five themes emerged: accessibility, no clear social media marketing plan, lack of user engagement, additional tasks, and issues and concerns in library social media. Librarians used common marketing strategies such as orientation and instruction and cited innovative strategies and best practices in promoting their library through social media. Lastly, librarians have gained insights in marketing academic libraries using social media, presented into four themes: enhanced library image, improved library services, gaining new skills, and developing a sense of responsibility. To further strengthen social media use in academic libraries, librarians are urged to formulate and intensify a social media marketing plan as a basis for future library social media marketing activities.

Keywords:
Library and information science, Social media, Academic libraries, Phenomenological, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The growing underutilization of library resources and services has prompted colleges and universities to apply marketing strategies like social media to keep libraries relevant and responsive to their stakeholders' needs.In the context of library marketing, social media is seen as a helpful tool for librarians and libraries to optimize their work and services and maintain their relevance. At the same time, patrons can share with potential users about the libraries' services promoted through blogs and social media sites (Amina&Nwanne, 2015). Other libraries are also taking advantage of Web 2.0 applications such as wikis, RSS (Really Simple Syndication), and podcasts (Alkindi& Al-Suqri, 2013). As libraries integrate Web 2.0 applications, librarians also need to evaluate the impact of their library services through social media metrics, user perceptions, the extent of library utilization, and visibility in the institution so that they can determine the library's return of investment in its services (Gonzales-Fernandez-Villavicencio et al., 2013; Lloret Romero, 2011; Sewell, 2013). Ayiah and Kumah (2011), Burclaff and Johnson (2016), Jones and Harvey (2016), and Khan and Bhatti (2012) cited social media for its usefulness as marketing or outreach tools. However, organizations may also face challenges such as daily content management, brand competition, susceptibility to quick feedback or criticisms, and potential distractions apart from opportunities to build brand awareness and customer loyalty (Rana & Kumar, 2016).

Some university libraries have recognized the necessity to adopt different marketing strategies to promote library services to students, especially with the rise of Internet and Web 2.0 technologies. In his comparative study, Scicluna (2015) observed that University of Glasgow and University of Malta had incorporated social media in their marketing and outreach efforts. Yet, those who take charge of library marketing in both institutions, including librarians, were also concerned with balancing communication, marketing, and customer care duties on a full-time basis. On the other hand, Omeluzor, Oyovwe-Tinuoye, and Abayomi (2016) revealed that academic librarians in Southeast Nigeria found social networking tools beneficial and cost-effective for delivering library services. Still, challenges were identified, such as erratic power supply, inadequate skill to manipulate social networking and other ICT tools, technophobia, lack of awareness, and lack of internet connection.

In Southeast Asia, Web 2.0 has significantly changed the way librarians interact with their users, with different applications offered depending on the library's needs (Awang&Abidin, 2013). Libraries use social media mostly to market information sources and services, promote library activities, and research purposes (Islam & Habiba, 2015; Khan & Bhatti, 2012). Although social media use has gained positive responses from library users, libraries are concerned about the possibility of social media misuse (Maharana, 2016).

Also, in Philippine academic libraries, librarians believe that marketing plays a significant role in ensuring that the library's academic community uses it. Furthermore, communication, visibility, and customer orientation are key factors in marketing (David & Sagun, 2012). As a response, social media is seen as a channel for libraries to reach out to their library communities. For instance, University of the Philippines Diliman Library has found the possibility of using Facebook to inform and publicize (Dar Juan, 2014). Yet, in one study, after analyzing library Facebook pages of ten colleges and universities in the Philippines in terms of user interaction, engagement is observed to be low for the majority of libraries (Peñaflor, 2018).

Still, the application of social media continues its trend in academic libraries in the local scene. Some academic libraries in Davao region use social media to promote the libraries' activities, post important announcements, and provide a venue for users' queries. But the question lies with how social media marketing has helped them attract library users to avail of the library services, which will eventually reflect through users' feedback and library utilization statistics. This research sought to uncover findings that could open other ideas and opportunities for other academic institutions in the region to promote their libraries to current and prospective users.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Marketing involves identifying users' needs and developing strategies and services to reach out to them to fulfil the library's organizational objectives rather than earn a financial profit (Edewor, Okite-Amughoro, Osuchukwu, &Egreajena, 2016). Marketing has become an integral function among libraries amid the challenges of a limited budget, increased user base, information explosion, rising costs of information materials, and complexity in user information requirements (Edewor, Okite-Amughoro, Osuchukwu, &Egreajena, 2016; Igbokwe, Ezeji, &Obidike, 2010). MacDonald and vanDuinkerken (2015) observed that libraries are no longer seen as the heart of the university or the primary go-to place for student and faculty research needs. With the emergence of technology, people have experienced a shift in the way of finding, accessing, and using new forms of information such as visiting Web browsers instead of libraries, which in turn, can affect changes in core library missions and services (Okon, Ime, &Etim, 2015). Gupta and Savard (2010) cited image and visibility problems among libraries and archives for a long time. In effect, applying marketing principles is seen as a remedy to the underutilization of resources and services (Aderibigbe& Farouk, 2017). For instance, libraries begin to establish their online presence by creating library websites and integrating them into their educational institutions (Becher,

2015; Igbokwe, Ezeji, &Obidike, 2010). However, the extent to which resources and services satisfy users' needs is determined by how they know such resources and services.

Also, web 2.0 refers to web-based applications whichinclude wikis, blogs, social networking, social bookmarking, video sharing, and other applications that allow participatory networking, where librarians and users can make dialogue, collaborate and share information in a user-centered way (Awang&Abidin, 2013; Wood, 2011; Canty, 2010). Web 2.0 applications, particularly social media, are used complementarily to promote library services and to engage with information users while promoting library services at the same time (Ayiah&Kumah, 2011; Burclaff& Johnson, 2016; Chua &Goh, 2010; Jones & Harvey, 2016; Khan &Bhatti, 2012).One of the most widely used social media tools cited is Facebook (Mustafa et al., 2016; Phillips, 2015; Graham, Faix, & Hartman, 2009). Wan (2011) viewed Facebook as a great potential for library marketing and outreach because it is free and easy to maintain. Libraries use Facebook mainly for marketing the library, information services, and information resources (Alkindi& Al-Suqri, 2013; Islam &Habiba, 2015). Among Asia-Pacific university libraries, 39% or the majority use Facebook for promotional purposes, where libraries share information with their users through Facebook posts (Tan et al., 2012). Although Facebook marketing has been encouraged for its cost-effectiveness, its success as a marketing tool would depend on understanding users' behavior, aside from the number of user connections with the library marketing methods (Palma, 2016; Chan, 2012). Jacobson (2011) added that librarians also have to actualize what they are posting on the library's Facebook pages.

Furthermore, the concept of Library 2.0 is strongly associated with Web and social media development. Kronqvist-Berg (2014) cited social media's relevance in the public library context through an integrated analysis that looked into the key elements of social media and public library context. Her study identified seven information activities on social media: reading, seeking, creating, communicating, informing, mediating, and contributing. Although this is a continually developing feature, her study reported a high level of social media services usage among library professionals and users and significant interest in Library 2.0 services.In their literature review, Magoi, Aspura, and Abrizah (2017) cited the benefits of using social media in libraries: promoting library services, improving professional knowledge, connecting with current and potential users, and media sharing and collaborating. Drawbacks were also noted, such as lack of awareness, lack of institutional control, lack of adequate technical infrastructures, lack of ICT skills and time, and privacy issues. Thus, Vassilakaki and Garoufallou (2014) posited that libraries should also develop guidelines for librarians and library users in accessing the information on social networking sites, with the impact observed on how discussions were conducted in an online environment, online privacy, and information overload.

Adding on, social networking sites are one of the communication technologies adapted among the academic community. It offers libraries opportunities to reach out to their clients since this platform has affected all organizations' operations and service delivery. Because of this trend, African university libraries have adapted the idea of having a social networking site linked to a university library's web page to provide an opportunity for a live discussion with a professional on issues on the use of the library while allowing the libraries to advertise their programs and activities (Ayiah&Kumah, 2011). In another instance, Ntaka (2017) concluded that students from Greek universities appreciate their library's Facebook page as an informational tool because it had helped create awareness of important educational programs. Similarly, Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman, and Witty (2010) found out that students are more open to using social networking sites than the faculty. Their survey showed that students seem much more open to the idea of using social networking sites such as Facebook in the academic setting. In another study, Shafawi and Hassan (2018) explored social media's implication to library usage, emphasizing user engagement in Malaysia's selected public and academic libraries. The study revealed that online engagement had a positive and statistically significant effect on actual library use. Results showed that most of the respondents sometimes visit the physical library, use the physical library facilities and

services, and participate in the library's event after engaging with the library. In contrast, 21.6% of them less frequently use online services after getting information through social media sites.

On the other hand, responses from the study of Jones and Harvey (2016) indicate that students can value the library service since they can find library services through the library's social media. But they do not see social media as an appropriate venue to engage with the library because of the traditional view that a library is a place of study and books and social media are associated with friends and play. Still, social networking was considered an effective method of student outreach in academic libraries, especially because college students are the most active users of social networking sites. However, there is also a need to watch for privacy issues (Dickson & Holley, 2010).

Generally, marketing has been an essential activity for libraries to make the library known to users, maximize utilization of the library's resources, educate users on the library services, and eventually gain user satisfaction. With the advancement of technology, Web 2.0 technologies, particularly social media, has become a well-accepted marketing strategy in the library environment because of its ease of use, as a venue for communication with users, and a way to improve customer service (Jain, 2014; Canty, 2012). Several studies have shown how social media has been integrated into library marketing efforts and how library users have become receptive to this trend. There may be various concerns arising in adopting the trend in terms of information access, privacy issues, and maintenance problems. Research opportunities are still open, especially in determining the success of applying such innovations for library marketing.

THEORETICAL LENS

The study is viewed through the Social Media Engagement Theory espoused by Di Gangi and Wasko (2016). The theory states that user experiences from social interactions among users and the social media platform's technical factors can influence user engagement and subsequent usage behavior, including perceptions of social acquaintances' critical mass. Thus, this theory's central premise is that higher user engagement leads to more significant social media platform usage. When social media activity is present, libraries can promote their products and services, and at the same time, provide an avenue for clientele to engage and participate in the development of library products (Khan & Bhatti, 2012). Contextually, this theory can help this study look into the library users' social media interaction and librarians' encounters when managing the library's social media page.

The Librarians' Use of Social Media for Promoting Library and Information Resources and Services (LUSP) model of Akporhonor and Olise (2015) also supports the study. This model illustrates the interaction between librarians' use of social media applications and the promotion of library and information resources and services. The authors posited that librarians using social media for professional purposes might likely promote library services or library resources since they let the users know what they are doing and what resources and services they offer to their users. This theory can help the researcher understand librarians' interaction in social media and how library users respond to it. It will also help explore how librarians use social media to promote libraries and services among academic institutions in Davao Region.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This phenomenological study aims to determine academic librarians' experiences in Davao Region in using social media as a library marketing tool.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This phenomenological study would like to discover new ideas and knowledge on academic librarians' experiences in Davao region in using social media as a library marketing tool. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What were the challenges of librarians in marketing academic libraries using social media?
2. What were the strategies of librarians in using social media in marketing academic libraries?
3. What were the insights of librarians in using social media in marketing academic libraries?

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative design using the phenomenological-descriptive approach. According to Creswell (2013), phenomenological research involves understanding the participants' lived experiences regarding the phenomenon studied. There were at least two librarians from each library chosen as key informants and utilized the purposive sampling technique that enabled the researcher to select people or sites that can help describe a case that illustrates the studied situation (Creswell, 2013). The participants were nine librarians from five selected higher Education Institutions in Davao Region, managing their library social media accounts from June 2018 to present, containing library announcements, promotional activities, or other useful information for study and research that were interviewed using validated interview guide. The data were analysed, guided by the qualitative study framework discussed by Creswell (2013) that consist of developing codes, formulating themes out of the codes, and generalizing the phenomenon based on the themes and the related literature.We used a matrix based on the example of Anderson and Spencer (2002) in arranging the themes that served as a guide to understand the case, wherein significant statements were selected from key informant interviews and grouped according to the similarity of meanings. A detailed description of the situation was provided, followed by grouping the data into categories and themes, and developing naturalistic generalizations of what was learned about the study.

Furthermore, we observed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to ensure the qualitative study's trustworthiness (Morse et al., 2002), to address the research's validity to check if the findings are accurate from the researcher's standpoint, the participant, or the readers (Creswell, 2014).

Adding on, qualitative researchers depend upon access to data, which may involve people cooperating in various ways (Hammersley&Traianou, 2012). Thus, we considered the ethical implications of any decisions we made, along with various constraints surrounding the research undertaking (Punch &Oancea, 2014). In conducting the key informant interviews, we ensured that the key informants voluntarily participated in the interview and assured that their identities would be kept confidential through an informed consent and codes were used to conceal the identity of the research participants. We observed the provisions of the Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Official Gazette, 2012), which emphasizes that personal data gathered must be for a declared, specified, and legitimate purpose. Thus, only the information collected based on the interview protocol and research guide questions were provided in presenting the study results. The presentation of the results would reflect only the significant responses based on the interview questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The study results are presented in three (3) parts: the challenges of librarians in marketing academic librarians using social media and its emerging themes; s*trategies of librarians in using social media in marketing academic libraries and insights of librarians in using social media in marketing academic libraries*

Challenges of Librarians in Marketing Academic Libraries Using Social Media

When asked about the challenges participants encountered in using social media in library marketing, five themes emerged: accessibility, no clear social media marketing plan, lack of user engagement, additional tasks, and issues and concerns in library social media.

Accessibility. The academic libraries involved in this study have already existing social media pages for how many years. Aside from being a medium for library marketing activities, librarians have seen social media as a means of communication in the workplace, especially to those assigned in separate sections.However, the study participants still noted challenges that hindered their access to social media for their marketing activities. Some of them are the following: social media is blocked in the institution, limited access for library staff, and slow internet connection. One typical instance among librarians is that social media sites are blocked in the whole campus. One participant commented: *"Angmgaempleyado, dilipwede mag FB during office hours, naa mi mandsate ana. How can we proceedsaamoangmgakuannga, nagiging part kasiang FB saamoang daily activities. Even sa group chat sa Messenger, nagiging workplace namoang Messenger."* (KI 8, Q1.2) (We have a mandate wherein employees cannot access Facebook during office hours. How can we proceed with our daily activities since Facebook and even group chats on Messenger have become part of our workplace?)

Furthermore, for libraries to have active social media sites, a stable internet connection is essential to communicate to library users and social media followers effectively. When librarians encounter problems in internet connection, the information that they have will become outdated. Another participant cited the effect after they have experienced a delay in announcing an event on social media because of problems in internet connection: *"Walana-disseminate ang info, wala pod syana-kuandidtomismosa account, sa page…walana-announce, anasya. So mag-appear didto, human naangkuan (event), maonanaangkuan, ah nagconductdiaysila, daghandiaynangapil, maodiayniang topic."* (KI 6, Q1.2) (The information was not disseminated because it was not announced on our page. So we were just able to post when the event is done.)

No clear social media marketing plan. The librarians recognize the need for a social media marketing plan, in which they could craft strategies to make the library social media page known to patrons. They may have planned on the activities to be done, but the problem is how these will be implemented. One participant admitted: *"Walapa pod sya proper program gani or, what do you call this…plan gani ma'am nanaay daily task unsay i-post karon, asakuhaon."* (KI 1, Q1.1) (We have no proper program yet, with assigned daily task on what to post and where to get them.)

Before implementing promotional activities, there was also a need to organize first the library's operations to effectively utilize the library and have the means to show what the library has to offer. One participant shared: *"Pagsulodnakodiria, kaning library, unorganized pa…walapa'y available records, wala pa nina-arrange. So pag-abotnako, murag nag-anokoba kung unsaonnakosyapag market ang library para mas daghan, modakoang utilization, kaypagsulodnakodiri, walaykopyasa utilization, walay record ang library about sa existing number of printed books so muragakotanansugod."* (KI 4, Q1.1) (When I came here, the library was still unorganized. There were no available records. I was also concerned about increasing the utilization since the library had no available record on utilization and existing printed books.)

Lack of user engagement. Another concern raised was how to gather followers in their library social media page, especially when the page was just starting. During library orientation, librarians encourage the students and faculty to "like" and follow the library social media pages. In this way, users are provided with a platform to get library updates and post their queries concerning library services. Even if librarians promoted the library page in library orientation sessions, it still gained few followers, so librarians continued to find ways to reach out to a wider audience. As one participant shared: *"Yung first nana-encounter naminna problem is on how to gather yungmga likers or followers ng page.Paanobanamin ma-market yung library kung walakamingmga followers sa page. So naghanap kami ng techniques, like for example during National Book Week. Actually, proposal yun, hindiyunnaminnagawa."* (KI 2, Q1.2) (The first problem we encountered was gathering likes or followers

and how we will market our library when we don't have followers. So, we thought of techniques like, for example, during National Book Week, but it was not realized.)

Additional tasks.Managing the library's social media page has become an added responsibility for librarians. Aside from their regular duties, librarians in-charge of the library social media accounts have some other tasks to be done.For instance, one librarian wasalso busy in pursuinggraduate studies apart from library tasks. As one participant shared: *"Aside ana, saiyaha man pod study, kaynaga-masteralna man pod sya, busy pod kaayoiyahangmga line-up. Sa ako pod, busy pod kaayokokay, naa man pod kogina-handle namga staff, mga intern saakoa man pod, so daghansyaugano, maong di na ma-maintain."* (KI 6, Q1.1) (Aside from that [social media page], she is also busy with her studies, she is taking up her master's degree. On my part, I am also busy handling staff and interns, that's why we cannot maintain the social media page). Thus, keeping the social media page up-to-date was sometimes left behind due to librarians' hectic workload.

To help lessen librarians' workload, some institutions would designate another staff to take charge of managing the library's social media page. The social media in-charge assigned is usually adept with computers and technology. However, there were instances where the in-charge has other functions apart from maintaining the library social media page. One participant added: *"Dapatnaagyud mag-facilitate na purely kayamoa man gud internet in-charge, daghan man gudsyag "slash," multitasking man gudsya…dililanggyudsyaingonna purely, or, for library kaygina-ano man pod syasa admin, maghimo'g tarpaulin, ingonani, so dilikaayosya ma-maintain."* (KI 6, Q1.1) (Our internet in-charge is multitasking; aside from the library, the admin would assign him to make tarpaulin and others, so the social media page is not that maintained.)

Issues and concerns on library social media. Librarians may have considered social media as an effective medium to promote their library and communicate with their patrons, but they still have issues and concerns surrounding its use.There were instances where students and school administrators expressed adverse feedback on social media use in libraries, with regard especially to library users' privacy.

Since the library social media page has become a venue to give feedback concerning library services, studentswould also channel their feedbacks on other departments through the library social media account. As one informant stated: *"Sa amoamubalikangmgakalagotsaestudyantegudsaubang department, saamoa i-blame…usahaydidtoginapostsa comments sakanang among post"* (KI 4, Q1.3) (Students' complaints to other departments are sometimes blamed to us by posting their comments on our post).Moreover, since everything posted on the social media page is visible to the public, data privacy has become a concern for the library and the institution. For instance, school administrators questioned the posting of top borrowers on social media because it might breach data privacy. One informant shared: *"Nagabutang man koug name…name saestudyante, tapos course, year, ug number of books nanahiram. Angpangutanalangsa QMO na…actually, gitan-aw nilaangakong post about anakay basin daw labagsa Data Privacy Act, perodili man syalabagkayangakoang purpose lang man is to encourage students pod na, ay, manghiramkokaysilanaay award, anagud."* (KI 4, Q1.3) (I have been posting names of students, their course and year, and the number of books they borrowed, but I was warned that it might violate the Data Privacy Act. I said that my purpose for posting is to encourage other students to borrow because they might get an award).

Strategies of Librarians in Using Social Media in Marketing Academic Libraries

Participants were asked about the strategies that they used in marketing their library through social media. They have traditional and innovative approaches and best practices to reach out to library patrons on social media.

Common marketing strategies. The most common strategy used by librarians in promoting their library social media page is through library orientation for freshmen students. Librarians also included the social media page link in the library user's guide, brochures, and bulletin boards. These strategies have made the students informed of the library services and updates posted on social media. It also provided a platform for students to publish their inquiries regarding library services. Aside from library orientation, the social media page is spread through word of mouth. Librarians also take library periods to inform the classes about social media pages and gather more followers. As one participant said: *"Ginapromotenamosya, during sa orientation. Actually, naayubanna, usahaykaynaaymga library period angmga teacher, especially samga senior high, so gina-ingnan pod nakoang teacher kasimaggamit man yansilasaamin, maggamitsilasa computer or kung naasila activity period, unyakuhaonangkatungilahanggihatagnga assignment, dapatnaay sign sa librarian. Usahay man gud, usa pod nasyasa--dili pod sya as in gihadlok…anolang, kanang, "sasunod ha, before komupirma, dapatnaka-like namosa Facebook page," mgaingana* (KI 4, Q2.2)." (We promote our library page during orientation. Actually, when senior high school teachers conduct library periods, we also inform the teachers since the class will be using our facilities, our computers, during their activity period. Their assignments should bear the signature of the librarian. I don't mean forcing them, but it's just my way of telling the students to like our Facebook page before I sign.)

Innovative strategies. Librarians employed unique techniques to encourage students to follow the library's social media pages. In one institution, students would show screenshots or proof that they have "liked" the library Facebook page as part of clearance requirements. Making the library social media accounts visible on the library website can also help reach a wider audience.Another innovative strategy done by librarians was conducting contests and activities during National Book Week, which involve library patrons' online participation. The "Book Face" or "My Book Selfie" contest has become a highlight among their library activities. It is a contest where participants use a book cover to take a creative selfie photo. Students submit their pictures through the library's Facebook page and tag their friends to "like" their entries. Such activities were an attractive way of promoting the library page to patrons while page visitors get amused with the posts. According to one informant: *"So kana sya, mga unique ngakuannilanganagiging phenomenon sya last Book Month celebration kaydaghankaayong nag join, peroang staff gudang nag-una-unaug post, hangtodangmga students ning-sunodunya mas creative ang students pod kaynalupigannilaang post sa staff."* (KI 8, Q2.2) (This activity is unique because it becomes a phenomenon every Book Week since more students join with their more creative entries.)

Best practices. Librarians have used other strategies that may also be helpful for library patrons. Interesting articles, video presentations, and infographics are posted on the library page so that users will become aware of the existing library services while providing information relevant to their research needs. Uploading pictures of library activities on the Facebook page for documentation purposes lets the patrons become more aware of the library's presence in the school community, thus, helping sustain their library marketing efforts. Even school-related announcements such as offering of new programs can also be a way for librarians to promote their newly acquired books. In one institution, the library has provided a feature in its social media page called "Libstagram," where users can post pictures and share their library experiences (KI 9, Q2.2). A more time-saving strategy cited is by reposting updates from other reliable sites. As oneinformant shared: *"So parehasanangEbscohost, angEbscohostkaymo-share man nasila'g tips on how to do fast research…so i-share nimona, at least naa pod—walaka nag-effort sa content, pero it's a relevant content, good content ngapwedemakaabotsaimuhang user"* (KI 7, Q2.2) (For example, Ebscohost shares tips on how to do fast research. It's a relevant and useful content which you can readily share to your users). These strategies boosted the library page and showed the followers some best features that the library can offer.

Insights of Librarians in Using Social Media in Marketing Academic Libraries

Lastly, librarians were asked what they have learned from using social media in their library marketing activities. They shared the following insights which can help other librarians who are planning to promote their libraries through social media.

Enhanced library image. Librarians have seen the need to be more responsive to the changing needs of library users. Since most of their library users are becoming active in social media, mere word of mouth cannot reach a wider audience. Through social media, page visitors can have a glimpse of the library's features, facilities, and resources. Patrons can also share their library experiences, which could give a positive impression to other library users. As one participant puts it: *"Using social media as a marketing tool will be good for the library. It has a big impact on the library's image as you gain more followers. It can also enable you to reach out more to your library users. I learned this from the seminars that I have attended, especially that our speakers encourage more social media use. Having more followers in your library social media account can make a great impact for your library since you can reach out more to your users"* (KI 1, Q3.1).

Improved library services. Through social media, students are informed that there are other facilities that the library has to offer. It contributed to having maximized library utilization after featuring some library services on social media. The library's social media page has also become a cost-effective means of disseminating information and improving its current awareness service. Eventually, the library has saved effort and resources in sending communications to library users. As one informant shared: *"Actually, it came out during the librarians' meetings that we need to improve the current awareness system that we are using in the library. Kasi di ba, before, it's really more on traditional, it's more on paper, and then we want to go paperless."* (KI 7, Q1.1)

Gained more skills. Adopting social media in library activities has also allowed librarians to gain other skills as they utilize library marketing technologies. Through social media, librarians have developed themselves in other aspects such as communication skills, critical thinking skills, marketing skills, and awareness of current events. Aside from being useful in their work as administrators of the library social media site, librarians' skills havehelped them engage with users online. Although librarians have developed themselves in other aspects, they admitted that they still have more to learn in social media technologies. They realized the importance of undergoing seminars and further training to help them improve their library marketing activities. One participant suggested: *"It's good to have proper training, although equipped nasila to use a Facebook account or mga personal na account. So it's still different.*" (KI 7, Q3.3) (It's good to have proper training, although they are already equipped to use Facebook. It's still different from using a personal Facebook account.)

Developed a sense of responsibility. Librarians realized that even simple online posts could create an impression of people serving the library and the services that the library offers. Accuracy of information is essential as part of the social media's role to inform library patrons. Librarians should also be honest in promoting on social media the existing services that the library offers. Otherwise, this may lead to misinformation on the part of the users. On the other side, even if the library is active in social media, this also calls for librarians to be mindful of their duties. The library's social media page is a reflection of what kind of library an institution has. Thus, librarians strive to cultivate a sense of responsibility to maintain a positive image from promoting their library through social media.In summary, one informant said: *"Social media can make or can break your office. Dependesya how you make it, and be ready lang if someone breaks it"* (KI 8, Q3.1). (Social media can make or break your office. It will depend on how you make it. You have to be on guard on who's going to break it.)

DISCUSSION

Results showed that social media marketing has become a trend among libraries and entails challenges. One of the study participants' challenges was the blocking of social media sites in their

schools. Some higher education institutions in Cyprus implemented a ban on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube in fear of their students watching immoral videos in school (Tuncay, 2018). For Amarakoon and Seneviratne (2014), limited access to social media happens because there is no agreement between library departments. Some are willing to use social networking tools, while others are hesitant. One informant's case relates to this, wherein their institution mandates that all its employees are not allowed to access Facebook during office hours. Still, the library continues its social media activities as long as they are done for official communication purposes.

Technical problems can have an impact on social media marketing activities. Participating librarians shared that they have experienced a delay in posting information because of slow internet connection. The internet's slow speed is also considered one of the top problems noted in some university libraries in the Asian context (Islam & Habiba, 2015; Khan & Bhatti, 2012). While in Nigeria, some authors cited erratic power supply, lack of ICT facilities, and lack of awareness in utilizing online technologies as challenges among academic libraries (Omeluzor, Oyovwe-Tinuoye, and Abayomi, 2016; Amina&Nwanne, 2015). Such challenges could negatively affect library service delivery. As shared by some librarians, the effect could be either the followers were informed late or the information posted becomes obsolete.

Promoting the library's social media page was also a challenge for the participating librarians. They have been promoting their social media page during library orientation, but it still gained few followers. Getting students engaged with the library through social media was also one of the difficulties reported by Jones and Harvey (2016) in their findings. The authors found out that there is a divide between what librarians think about students' social media use and what students want from the library's social media presence. Also, social media is being associated with friends and play while library with work. However, according to Ramsey and Vecchione (2014), the library can establish itself as a campus community information center by posting about other campus departments' resources and events to engage more with the school community.

Garoufallou, Zafeiriou, Siatri, and Balapanidou (2013) revealed that despite a high unemployment rate in library and information science undergraduates, academic librarians considered the lack of well-informed professional staff as one factor contributing to the low penetration of marketing techniques in Greek academic libraries. In the local context, the librarians said that managing the library's social media page is an added responsibility for them aside from their regular tasks. Eventually, keeping the social media page up-to-date was left behind due to the hectic workload of librarians. In effect,Dar Juan (2014) cited improper monitoring due to multitasking staff and cases of inaccurate posts with either factual or grammatical errors.

For Tella and Akinboro (2015), although librarians are already embracing Web 2.0 technologies in the library setting, there is a significant level of confusion, skepticism, resistance, and fear surrounding technology use among African libraries. Particular challenges were noted in terms of social media use in libraries, such as organization support, user orientation, user participation, training, privacy issues, skilled labor, technical and institutional barriers, which were also experienced by the participants. From the various challenges cited in social media marketing, defining specific policies was suggested to clarify libraries' responsibilities in social media outreach activities (Abdullah, Chu, Rajagopal, Tung, &Kwong-Man, 2015).

As one participant shared, privacy issues were even questioned towards libraries using social media. Massi (2017) noted that some social media platforms that are the most popular could potentially open up the user to potential hacks or privacy breach. Aside from that, negative postings from users could fuel distressful situations at times, which have made libraries more cautious in using social media technologies since data privacy would not only concern the library's image, but even the academic

institution itself (Dar Juan, 2014; Magoi, Aspura, &Abrizah, 2017). Nevertheless, social media can still be an effective method of reaching out to academic library users, as long as student privacy is considered and equal coverage is provided in all subject areas (Dickson & Holley, 2010).

Also, the study found out that Davao region librarians employed traditional and innovative strategies, and cited some of their best practices to reach out to library patrons in social media. The most common way to inform the users on the library social media page is through library orientation. This promotion technique and classroom instruction are considered most effective concerning event promotion techniques since it emphasizes the importance and effectiveness of individual and group interactions (Yi, 2016). As librarians embrace innovation, social media has become a tool for library orientation in academic libraries due to its wider coverage, ease of use, cost-effectiveness, and interactive feature (Benson & Nkechi, 2019). Although participating librarians still conduct library orientation through actual class sessions, they still use it as an opportunity to inform and encourage students to post their inquiries regarding library services through social media. With this, Tella and Akinboro (2015) cited Facebook, for instance, as a platform for library users to ask questions on library use. Aside from library orientation, the librarians also included the social media pages' links in the library user's guide, brochures, and bulletin boards.

Innovative strategies include organizing National Book Week activities such as "Book Face" and "My Book Selfie," where students invite others to like their entries and follow the library social media page in the process. Based on Jones's (2017) suggestion, contests on social media with user-generated content form submissions can increase online engagement, grow email lists, and reach more people. Aside from attracting more followers, these also help provide information relevant to library patrons' research needs. Posting interesting articles, video presentations, and infographics on library social media were considered best practices among participating librarians. Social media followers can also contribute blog posts, website pages, images, social media posts, and testimonials to get more mileage. Such activities connect to Jain's (2013) cited guidelines for successful social media marketing in libraries, including deciding what content to post, promoting events, engaging library patrons with contests, and strategizing to market social media presence by establishing linkages among friends and other people.

Another best practice shared by one of the key informants is providing patrons a platform to post pictures of their library experiences on the social media page. These activities corroborate with Shafawi and Hassan's (2018) findings, which implied a better increase in user engagement if more quality content is posted on social media channels since information quality was a significant predictor of user engagement on social media channels. Joo, Choi, and Baek (2018) added that posts on community news and those with attached images and emotionally inspiring messages tend to receive more user engagement.

Furthermore, the librarians' insights in marketing academic libraries using social media reported an enhanced library image, improved library services, and developed professional competencies. Exploring social media possibilities to interact and connect with their patrons is still relatively new for information professionals. Through social media, page visitors can take a glance at the library's features, facilities, and resources. Thus, librarians have perceived that using social media as a marketing tool can help enhance library image. Such perspective supports the responses from Roos's (2013) study wherein respondents defined library marketing as an activity that involves image building and advertising or selling of library services.Librarians also perceived that social media ha**d** become a cost-effective means of disseminating information to library patrons, thus improving current awareness services. For instance, Mazzocchi (2014), Mustafa et al. (2016), and Tan et al. (2012) cited Facebook as a communication tool for disseminating information on library services and events, and asan effective medium for answering user inquiries**.**

As librarians utilize social media technologies in promoting academic libraries, they also develop specific skills in the process, such as communication, marketing, and current awareness. This insight supports the idea of Murphy and Moulaison (2009), wherein librarians need a new branch of skills required in utilizing social networking sites to provide quality services and maintain their role as information experts in a Web 2.0 world. Similarly, Shahbazi and Hedayati (2016) noted that communication skills are the most in-demand digital librarian competencies according to the analysis of newly emerging IT-based LIS jobs in 2013. Furthermore, they identified competencies such as searching methods, information-seeking consultation, knowledge of Web 2.0 services, and knowledge of basic computer concepts necessary for librarians' jobs that deal with information technology. Thus, social media use also calls for librarians to explore more opportunities to develop additional social media competencies. This insight supports Magoi, Aspura, and Abrizah (2017), citing professional knowledge improvement as one of the benefits of using social media in libraries.

Lastly, librarians have gained a sense of responsibility as administrators of their library social media accounts while applying their communication skills at the same time. They have also become conscious in terms of grammar and accuracy of information in their social media posts to avoid misinformation on the users' part. Similarly, Amina and Nwanne (2015) stressed mindfulness in posting on social media because if online content is shared wrongly, it might be difficult to take it offline again and remain there for everybody to see.

Limitations of the Study

The study explored how social media is used as a marketing tool among academic libraries in Davao Region. In the entire region, Davao City was chosen as the research locale because of the high concentration of colleges and universities. Most of these institutions have library social media accounts for promoting library services and updating on library activities. The selection of academic libraries in Davao Region having active social media accounts was based on the most number of Facebook likes, other social media accounts, and online posts' recency.

Inasmuch as we would want to gather data from all libraries with existing social media accounts,we have encountered challenges during the conduct of this study. Some institutions that have met the inclusion criteria are stringent in obtaining information from the prospective participants, such as submitting papers to their Research Ethics Committee for further evaluation. Moreover, the data gathered were only limited to librarians' experiences regarding their challenges, strategies, and insights in using social media in marketing their library. Wewere not able to include the extent of user engagement in the study's scope since Iwas not able to gather feedback from actual library users onthe library’s social media marketing activities. This may be suggested for future researchersto add support to the findings of this research undertaking.

Implications of the Study

Based on this study's findings, librarians still support the use of social media as a marketing tool for academic libraries. Since this has been an emerging trend among academic libraries in the region, this study has provided insights that may be shared as learning experiences for other librarians and information professionals who would like to follow this trend. Thus, recommendations were also made to encourage maximized usage of this tool among academic institutions.

Through this study, administrators may see social media as an innovative strategy in promoting their academic institution alongside marketing their library. Library administrators may ask the school administrators to strengthen social media use in library marketing further while promoting their institution in the process. They can also formulate policies and define specific tasks to effectively utilize this tool to promote both the library and the institution. Librarians are urged to develop a social media marketing plan to guide what should be posted on their library social media accounts and serve as a basis for future

library social media marketing activities. In turn, to gain more user engagement, those who take charge of managing the library social media page should continually update their followers through sharing more informative content, aside from regular posting of library announcements.With the growing number of libraries in the region using social media, librarians can conduct more seminars and training to promote awareness of social media's benefits in boosting the library services and be equipped with the skills needed to sustain the social media marketing activities.

This study can also serve as a bridge for further research, especially on the implication of using social media in libraries to library users. Since the study is only limited to the librarians' experiences in using social media as a library marketing tool, future researchers may conduct another research on social media marketing's implication to the extent of library utilization in academic libraries. They can also explore the perspectives of library patrons regarding the use of social media in libraries.

Conclusions

This study provided a different view of social media usage in academic libraries. Despite the challenges in social media access, librarians in Davao region are open to this emerging trend. They have seen this as an opportunity to engage with their library patrons to boost library services utilization. On the other hand, librarians should also be innovative and creative in updating their social media page to entice faculty and students to access the library's rich resources and efficient services.

Ultimately, librarians strive to cultivate a sense of responsibility because, for them, the library's social media page is a reflection of what kind of library a higher education institution has. To maintain the positive image that they have gained from promoting their library through social media, librarians have become cautious of what they post and observe accuracy and honesty in providing information online.

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PHILIPPINE K TO 12 IMPLEMENTATION: DIFFICULTIES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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ABSTRACT

K to 12 curriculum created novel challenges among educators, parents, students, school administrators, and stakeholders. Thus, this study described the difficulties and coping strategies of elementary school administrators in dealing with the K to 12 program implementation. This study employed the qualitative phenomenological research design, which included twelve (12) school administrators in Davao del Sur in selected public elementary schools. Key Informant Interview was utilized to gather necessary data to bring out the difficulties and coping strategies of elementary school administrators on the K to 12 implementation in the Philippines. Results revealed that participants experienced scarcity of learning materials, lack of training and orientations, low-quality materials, and additional workload. Despite the challenges, school administrators find ways to mitigate their current situation, such as employing innovative strategies, social support systems, and personal coping strategies. The results of this study would bridge to future research about the experiences of other school administrators, teachers, and students who had undergone the K to 12 curriculum.

Keywords: *Education, K to 12, school administrators, Phenomenology, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of Republic Act No. 10533 in the Philippines, known as "The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013," presented different challenges as admitted by the secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd), Leonor M. Briones (Malipot, 2018). The new curriculum, widely known as the K to 12 curriculum, was the country's first significant educational system shift since 1945 and has been a vast transformation of its educational system, primarily to the public schools. Even today, it has School administrators who were in distress about implementing the new curriculum because problems in resource shortage plague it. This situation has been felt even in private schools that directly assess and provide its own school's needs. How much more in public schools which depend on the government's budget for all their operational requirements

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Undoubtedly, there have been hindrances to implementing curriculum change even though Lingard (2018) regarded this change as both a response to and articulation of globalization. In the United States, principals were resistant to the reform (Fink, 2014) in Washington's remote town. Meanwhile, Rose (2016) found that Australian education had been fraught with challenges in the insufficiency of

training, focus on pedagogy, support and application of numeracy, literacy, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) capabilities on the implementation of their national curriculum reform. These challenges have been the baggage of school administrators as manifested in many countries.

The implementation stages difficulties have never been contemporary in Asian countries (Cheung & Man Wong, 2012). It only led principals and teachers to compliance, examination, and pedagogic culture of dilemma (Law, 2014). The need for more understanding of curriculum implementation (Cheung & Man Wong, 2012) had been principals' sentiments in Hong Kong. Several principals were dissatisfied and lacked confidence in the central agencies' competence in supporting the curriculum reform (Adamson, Tak-Shing, Wai-Ming, Kin-Sang, Hau-Fai & Wai-Lun, 2010). These reasons led to many unsuccessful curriculum reforms in education.

As school managers, principals directly shouldered problems and implementation issues in the Philippines' K to 12 curriculum, though Okabe (2013) articulated that the curriculum was timely and admirable. To mention these problems: there were an insufficient knowledge and experiences of the school leaders (Guru & Abulad, 2016), which include school administrators as the front line of the school's entirety, schools in rural areas did not receive much support from the government (Durban & Catalan, 2015), as noticed in the lack of quality school supplies, limited resources, and inadequate technology infrastructure (Brooks & Sutherland, 2014) in the secondary level. These were among the issues that school administrators faced from their day-to-day living to realize the reform. However, despite these challenges, they sorted out strategies that somehow alleviated their present situation. They changed their previous and usual practices in several ways (Husband & Hunt, 2015). Mokhele (2012) concluded in his study that school principals motivated the teachers and engaged the society in fulfilling the implementation, while Zhan, So, Winnie, Cheng & Irene (2016) added that they too changed their teaching approaches and materials used in the teaching and learning process. On the other hand, when principals showed idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Arokiasamy, Abdullah & Ismael, 2014), it demonstrated satisfaction among teachers. It resulted in better performance of the implementation.

Principals' leadership and skills need to equate to the needs of the curriculum. Still, studies globally, regionally, and locally showed that school principals encounter difficulties implementing a new curriculum. Though few studies identified the obstacles as mentioned earlier linked principals' efforts towards program implementation improvement, such a link seemed plausible in most cases. And such barriers could be symptoms of a more fundamental problem yet uncovered. Geographically, only a few studies were conducted on principals' struggles and mainly focused on secondary schools' perspectives. For this reason, I felt that there was a need to explore Filipino public elementary school administrators' efforts regarding the implementation of the K to 12 program in the Philippines and their coping strategies with the challenges they met through this qualitative study.

Theoretical Lens

This study was from the lens of the Complexity Theory of Cowan (1980). Complexity theory developed by Cowan in the 1980s could best explain that school administrators have coping strategies despite the challenges they had. This theory was drawn from research in the natural sciences that examined uncertainty and non-linearity used in strategic management and organizational studies. In this theory, as used in sciences, an organism senses and responds to its environment, thereby changing its environment changes the organism, reacting actively, proactively, and reactively to the changes and its environment. Any organization and institution employed adjustments and developments to survive in the changing external environment. In this study, this theory explained that during reforms or changes in the educational system, school leaders struggle in many ways but could find the keys of unfolding the light of their leadership in the implementation. Understanding how school administrators adapted to their

environments and how they coped with uncertainty and the multifaceted problems involving change could best resolve the difficulties they experienced.

Purpose of the Study

This phenomenological qualitative study aimed to explore elementary school administrators' difficulties and coping strategies in dealing with the K to 12 program implementation in the Department of Education.

Research Questions

1. What are the difficulties experienced by the public elementary school administrators in implementing the K to12 curriculum?
2. What are the coping strategies of the public elementary school administrators in dealing with the difficulties encountered in implementing the K to12 curriculum?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

School leaders and teachers are directly affected whenever changes in the educative process occur since they are the direct persons involved in the implementation. School leaders' feedback around the world on a new curriculum's performance provided substantial evidence that there were factors why and how the new curriculum is successful or a failure. Principals' or school leaders' views on curriculum reforms and their experiences during implementation will be in this review.

School Administrators and the Curriculum Reform

The need for leaders and leadership has not changed even though the practice of leadership had (Bass,1990 and Kouzes & Posner,1995 cited in Normore, 2016). In the process of curriculum change, the role of school administrators in curriculum implementation was not only supervision, but it encompassed many things ensuring the achievement of curricular objectives (Onojerena, 2014). However, some principals had limited understanding of what comprised their role and experienced many impediments (Mafora & Phorabatho, 2013). Some principals expressed their struggles in content expertise and difficulty managing their time between being a building manager and an instructional leader (Fink, 2014).

School leaders were seen and expected to function most of their duties as instructional leaders, but Smith (2011) stated that they must also possess important characteristics being the transformational leader. This type of leaders had effects on satisfaction among teachers and better performance at school. However, García-Morales, Jiménez-Barrionuevo, and Gutiérrez-Gutiérrez (2012) contended that there were no studies conducted in knowing the interrelations between types of leadership and improving organizational performance. Therefore, a strong foundation of leadership is necessary, especially in the field of education.

More vivid concerns elicit school leaders' anxiousness and struggle to set their roles as instructional and transformational leaders. Principals faced the challenge of how best to meet the expectation set forth by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy in the USA. Pepper (2010) concluded that their ability to balance their transformational and instructional leadership styles skilfully would pave the way to achieving the law's goals. Similarly, school leaders in the UAE had the same difficulty as discovered by Ishimaru (2013). They struggled to navigate a clear understanding of their conflicting leadership role expectations from higher ranks and a link on the same ground of concern. Thus, the school principal's leadership in curriculum implementation had a substantial reason for the undertaking's success or failure.

When China used curriculum reform as a critical strategy to counter manpower-related global challenges and empower the country in the 21st century (Law, 2014), there was an apparent failure of the curriculum reform that took root in schools (Walker, Haiyan, & Shuang, 2011). Hong Kong principals

also noticed the insufficiencies in the preparation of the implementation. These have been a challenging factor, just like what happened when the National Secondary School Curriculum (NSSC) was introduced (Adamson et al., 2010). Despite these views, Karami (2014) stated that educational reformers worldwide were willing to reinvent their practice and search for new platforms for growth for reforms and positively affect students' learning. Hence, principals' strong leadership is the key to how and why changes in the educational system failed or succeed, whether in instructional or transformational terms.

The Philippines' K-12 curriculum aims to address the Philippine educational system's deficiency, particularly in basic education. It also sought to respond to the international education criteria standards and be leveled with the students in neighboring countries (Okabe, 2013). To achieve this, the Department of Education (DepEd) laid the new curriculum's salient features. The universal kindergarten (children at the age of five years old would start schooling), and Mother Tongue Based- Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) as the medium of instruction in all learning areas except English and Filipino from kindergarten to grade three from its bilingual aspect (Filipino and English language) in the previous curriculum. MTB had also been added as a learning area in grades one to three. Another feature was contextualization and enhancement. The instructions' content was in spiral progression, contextualized, and indigenized based on the learners' schema.

Though the government held a firm stance that the new curriculum would be the immediate solution to the enduring crises facing the country's basic education, Alegado (2018) concluded that many doubted this reform's capacity to bring forth change. Some of the reasons for these doubts as discovered were: schools in rural areas do not receive much support from the government (Durban & Catalan, 2015), as noticed in the lack of quality school supplies, limited resources, and inferior technology infrastructure (Brooks & Sutherland, 2014). Ferreol and Gutierez (2015) added that even school leaders had inadequate training, especially content and pedagogy-related matters. It transpired on exerting much of their time in administrative practices (Tito & Perez, 2017) and insufficient knowledge and experiences of the school leaders (Guru & Abulad, 2016). From these pieces of evidence, school administrators were facing an extraordinary burden and heavy loads in realizing the thrust of DepEd in its new educational system.

Challenges of School Administrators

As a response and articulation to globalization, educational systems change (Lingard, 2018)**.** Due to differences, school administrators faced challenges in professional development, scheduling and workloads, lack of support, cultural diversity, and financial responsibility.

Professional development. School systems expected school principals to have extraordinary credentials, experience, and dispositions to modernize the visions and enable transformational change and engage in instructional leadership (Richardson, Watts, Hollis & McLeod, 2016). Studies of effective principals revealed that the significant reason for principal failure in curriculum implementation was the inability to deal with people (Lunenburg, Muse & Abrams, 2011). Principals often felt the lack of professional development during curriculum reforms, as shown by China's educational leaders. They had limited teaching experience and had low levels of formal education with little training and professional development (Militello & Berger, 2010), all of which the reform needed. They were unsure if they had the necessary knowledge and skills to do the new work (Phillips, 2018).

Furthermore, some teachers opposed principals' leadership in modifying their teaching strategies (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014), while others had shown low commitment towards reforms. Unfortunately, some school leaders admitted that they lack the skill to address it (Bala, 2017). Their community relationships also struggled because they gave an increasing focus on test pressures (Husband & Hunt, 2015) brought by the reform rather than on strengthening their collaboration effort with the community. Thus, this gives the idea that leading the reform also means teaching people to change.

Scheduling and workloads. Principals felt frustrated during the implementation of curricular reforms. They thought the lack of time in the initial implementation year concerning learning requirements, rubrics, and evaluating teachers in the new system and some program components are still in the design phase (Derrington & Campbell, 2015). Bridges and Searle (2011) and Cheung et al. (2012) concluded in their studies that the conception of principals of having a stabilized, reduced, and more manageable workload during reforms were hopeless because they were working 55 hours a week, which was a 10% increase than before when the reform bedded in. After seven years, Phillips (2018) still discovered the same phenomenon in Iowa where principals felt frustrated because there was not even enough time to complete their work in a day. Principals claimed that they have increased responsibilities and accountabilities (Ng & Pun, 2013). It left them the feeling of consumed and sandwiched by and between the competing demands (Lindberg, 2014). These workloads were unreasonable as they added their time spent in school and took away their time (Bridges & Searle, 2016). Moreover, Lingam, Lingam & Sharma (2017) concluded on their study on the implication of the educational reforms that school leaders' difficulty in balancing their workloads and that of the teachers primarily to schools with fewer teachers, was common in developed countries. Time management and balancing the administrator's responsibilities were factors in implementing a curriculum reform at its best.

Lack of Support. Support from the government and agency leading the reform was essential to the school administrators, and most of them agreed that they did not receive much (Cheung & Man Wong, 2012; Durban & Catalan, 2012; Phillips, 2018). The support needs referred to were mostly in addressing teachers' claims to their school leaders. To mention, scarcity of resources, heavy workloads, learners' diversity (Cabili, Sequete & Capilitan, 2015; Cheung et al., 2012; Nahal, 2010) were the everyday needs that agencies should consider in addressing (Kovačević, Rahimić & Šehić, 2018). Moreover, agencies must address insufficient teacher training on pedagogy and understanding the whole concept of the reform. These were essential in a workplace as they laid the foundation of an employee's new career (Oregon State University, 2018). When a professional employee performs their jobs according to standards, they contributed to a group's success.

Cultural diversity. There was a need to develop the knowledge of school leaders on cultural diversity (Backor& Gordon, 2015) that begins in understanding one's own culture before the preceding others (Kovačević et al., 2018). Philippine K to 12 program addressed this concern as reflected in the law's statement where learning materials and medium of instruction to the primary levels would be in Mother Tongue Based (MTB). However, school leaders and teachers assigned in schools were not locals who had no or less background of the learners and community's culture.

Financial responsibility. Principals suffered constraints in financial responsibility issues (Walker et al., 2012). This responsibility is time-consuming (Lindberg, 2014) because principals needed to attend to many acute problems. It was evident in the division of Davao del Sur wherein principals consumed much of their time in monthly liquidating the government's monetary subsidy to every school, namely: Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) and the School-Based Feeding Program (SBFP). Failure to do so, the division would forfeit the school's budget for that specific month, which would result in the unavailability of the needed resources for the month and would further affect the performance-based bonus of teachers. Malito (2018) stated that most public-school teachers spent their own money on school supplies. Ninety-four percent of public-school teachers have spent their own money for school purposes without being reimbursed, according to research conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics between 2014 and 2016.

Coping Strategies of School Administrators

Despite challenges experienced by school administrators during educational settings, they could mitigate their current situations through different strategies.

Emotional coping strategy. School principals were effective when they were able to influence their teachers to believe what they believe. Bonifacio (2013) concluded that principals would achieve it with the support given by teachers, superiors, and the government. However, as Quebec's principals observed, they sometimes inhibited their emotions to preserve a harmonious school climate (Poirel & Yvon, 2014). Meanwhile, principals in Ireland reflected their feelings and others, engaged in emotional learning, and understood their teachers' strengths and limitations (Brennan & Ruairc, 2011).

Moreover, in his study, Miller (2013) stated the importance of motivation as a driving force of an individuals' action in reaching goals. It was the reward for achieving the goals that motivate or the feeling of fulfillment given by the accomplishment that drives. According to Ivy Exec Inc. (2018), body language is a valuable tool to inspire and encourage. Hence, body language was more influential than talk.

Communication. Imparting and exchanging information was essential in building and maintaining relationships, especially in significant changes like educational reforms. Principals explained to teachers that the new reform requirements were reasonable and achievable if they consider their attitudes and needs considering the externally imposed instructions (Brezicha, Bergmark, & Mitra, 2015). Communication was used to develop shared meanings and created visions to enhance an organization's future and guided through times of change.

Personal coping. Individuals adopted various coping strategies on their own (Xiao & Cooke, 2012) when stoked with challenges. Helitzer, Graeber, Lanoue, and Newbill (2015) stated that they involved generating, implementing, and evaluating personal actions to solve the problem. School principals demonstrated a sound understanding of the necessity to change first and assess the entire school's needs to lead the change (Ibrahin & Al-mashhadany, 2012). Such positive attitude in manifesting individual coping had a significant impact on persons' well-being and Somech & Drach-Zahavy (2012) proved that is a better approach to mitigating work-family conflicts.

Delegation of responsibility. Delegation is assigning responsibility or chunking work and giving authority how to do the task (Huang et al., 2016). Research has shown that leaders who delegate had higher rates of effectiveness (Drescher, 2017). Rogers (2018) also added that influential leaders delegate works, allowing themselves to have more time to strategize and plan while providing new avenues to develop their skills and confidence. When done successfully, this would be beneficial to both parties.

Building connections with people. Schools do not exist in isolation, and they needed the support and help of the whole community. The African proverb which says, "It takes a village to raise a child" sounded to be true. As a child needs love and relationships with lots of different people (McBain, 2019) which is same as true in schools. School-community collaboration established an educative community composed of educating entities such as home, school, religious places, and agencies. According to Usigan (2017), building trust and community networks involved a sense of transparency and shared responsibility among parents, teachers, staff, principals, and the community. Administrators should not take it lightly when it comes to transparency of the school aspect.

Hence, the literature mentioned above, such as the need for professional development, frustration in workload distribution, lack of support from the government, dealing with diverse learners, and financial responsibility constraints, explained the school administrator's vast responsibility. Specifically, going through the rigors of implementing the new curriculum put their leadership in managing the school towards reform into a test. School administrators must be aware of how to assume their responsibilities, address their needs for them to function well, and be conscious enough of several areas and rooms for improvement in dealing with such difficulties. The mentioned expected responsibilities of principals warranted immediate response and attention. In return, they could successfully implement the curriculum's desired changes as directed by our educational system.

METHODS

This part of the study presented the process and procedures as used during the conduct of the study. Included herewith are research design, participants, sampling, data sources, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative method using a phenomenological approach. It is an approach that aims to describe, understand and interpret the meanings of experiences of a specific group of participants. It seeks to understand participants' observation, in-depth interviewing, and others that yield descriptive data through the qualitative method (Townsend, Cox & Li, 2010). Thus, the qualitative approach focused on research questions such as; what is it like to experience a particular situation (Creswell, 2007). Interviewing, observing, and analyzing were the central process of this method (Miriam & Tisdell, 2015; Kilicoglu, 2018), describing the events in a natural environment realistically and holistically. Qualitative is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in people's lived experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2014) and is concerned with establishing answers to the whys and hows of a certain phenomenon.

The phenomenological approach uses observable techniques such as observations/fieldwork, narratives, analysis, reenactments of lived experiences, and thinking with theory (Vagle, 2018). It could provide a more contextual approach to ethical decision-making by probing, uncovering, and interpreting the meanings of participants' responses (Greenfield & Jensen, 2016). Hence, this study explored school administrators' lived experiences in implementing the K to 12 curriculum, particularly their difficulties and coping mechanisms through interviewing, observing, and analyzing their responses.

Participants

The participants of the study were twelve (12) public school administrators who shared their experiences and thoughts as school leaders in implementing the Department of Education's curriculum reform- the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 known as the K to12 Curriculum. They were those who could give the best information as stated in the research questions. In a qualitative method using the phenomenological process, five (5) up to twenty-five (25) participants shall be selected who could best give their shared experiences in the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Alase, 2017). In determining the participants in this study, the established criteria were: Current public elementary school administrators in Davao del Sur's division with at least three (3) years of experience as school administrators. They were spearheading either central or big schools as identified by the division of Davao del Sur. This study did not include the School Administrators leading small schools determined by Davao del Sur's division.

Data Sampling

This study used a purposive sampling technique. It is a type of sampling helpful in studying and gathering information on understanding the search problem and context of the present study's phenomenon (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative studies because it involved the importance of the informants' availability and cooperation to participate and communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner (Etikan, Musa &Alhassim, 2016). Thus, it helped derive a conclusion wherein information-rich cases from the participants who underwent a particular phenomenon from illuminating the questions under study (Patton, 2005; Polit & Beck, 2010). In connection to this, the selection of school administrators was done based on the set criteria. The researcher interviewed twelve (12) school administrators with at least three years of experience as school administrators who run either central or big schools.

Data Sources

The information gathered from the school administrators' Key Informant Interviews (KII) was drawn from the interview protocols' questions. It involved interviewing a selected group of individuals who provided the more needed information, ideas, and deeper insights on a particular subject (Kumar, 1989; Marshall, 1996; Ayala & Elder, 2011). KII involved an in-depth interview of selected participants for their first-hand knowledge about the topic of interest where interviews are loosely structured and relied on a list of issues (USAID,1996 cited in Macfarlan, 2018). KII resembles a conversation among acquaintances, allowing a free flow of ideas and information. Interviewers framed questions spontaneously, probed for information, and took notes. Interviews were conducted in the second semester of the school year 2018-2019 among school administrators in the division of Davao del Sur. There were a proper recording and transcription of the entire duration of the interviews. Other sources of information that supported this study were online journal articles and books.

Data Collection

To collect the needed data for this study, an initial survey for individuals who were suitable informants in the division of Davao del Sur, Philippines, was done, as suggested by Creswell (2007), considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria set for this study. As the researcher, I sent the letter of permission to the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) office to conduct the study. I sent letters of authorization to conduct the study to the different chosen district supervisors with the SDS authorization. Upon their approval, informed consent was sent to different school administrators referred and recommended by the district supervisor. In the given informed consent to the participants, proper explanation of the study's purpose and significance were stressed out, including the importance of their participation and the time they willingly contributed and, above all, the assurance of their identity's confidentiality on the duration of the study. They were also informed and thoroughly explained that their participation was voluntary and that they might opt not to continue their involvement if they felt uncomfortable during the interview process.

Thus, there was a strict observation on the interviewee's meeting based on the date, time, and location of the participant's interview and recording his/her remarks and responses and individual assessment through taking notes and audio recorders. The researcher considered the following conventions: i.) The participants knew that there was a recording procedure on the entire interview through taking down notes and an audio recorder for the motivation behind appropriate interpretation and later, on the investigation; ii.) After the interview, information derived from them was securely kept, and their identity was preserved correctly; iii.) The transcribed data from the recorded interview was confirmed by the interviewee to observe the data's precision and accuracy, and iv.) In the conducted study, as the researcher, I was the interviewer, transcriber, audio recording operator, and record keeper for the duration of the interview.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This study used thematic analysis. It encodes qualitative information that requires explicit codes that may be in the form of a list of causally related themes and may be directly or indirectly observable in the information (Boyatzis, 1998 cited in Heath, 2010). Joffe (2012) added that the themes formed are implicit or explicit patterns of responses. The gathered data were analyzed using the method of Collaizi (1978). The themes were identified from the essential or interesting patterns in the data and used in addressing the research issue (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

For easier data analysis and interpretation method, this study used a tabular presentation for each research question, which includes the participants' significant verbatim responses, participants' code in the KII coding, and formulated meanings. Then, formulated meanings were clustered into themes as meanings of the common responses, further classified into emergent themes. The emerging themes as the major themes were utilized and clearly elaborated in the discussion based on the results of the study.

Trustworthiness. Ensuring the trustworthiness of this study was one of the concerns that I considered. Elo et al. (2014) stated that in ensuring trustworthiness, analysis phased from data collection must be scrutinized well from organizing down to reporting results. Experts validated guide questions used during the interview. Thus, an observation of the following measure to assure this study's reliability: credibility, dependability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Credibility. It is the confidence placed in the research findings' truth (Connelly, 2016). It is also equivalent to internal validity, which is concerned with the aspect of truth-value (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Thus, there must be a rigor of inquiry by adopting credibility strategies suggested by Anney (2014). It includes long and varied field experience, time sampling, reflexivity (field journal), triangulation, member checking, peer examination, interview technique, researcher authority, and structural coherence. This study's veracity used standard procedures to conduct qualitative research and gather the needed information to ensure credibility. Forms and letters presented to this study's participants before and after the key informant interviews established credibility. Concerning accuracy and congruency of information, I employed the member-checking method to validate their responses' translations.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the study's generalization applicable in other settings, contexts, and respondents (Polit & Beck, 2010). It is the interpretive equivalent of generalizability (Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004) as cited by Anney (2014). This research aimed to guide future researchers who plan to study a phenomenon similar to this study. In promoting transferability, the conclusions of this study were from the results given by the informants. Thus, the researcher observed Shenton's (2004) suggestion in providing detailed information about this study's context to help other people understand this study by citing various authors to present the phenomenon in several fields.

Dependability. Dependability has something to do with how reliable a study is (Creswell, 2007). It involved participants evaluating the findings and the study's interpretation and recommendations to ensure that they are supported by the study's informants (Cohen et al., 2011).

This study is dependable because the collected data and information were from the school administrators' personal and lived experiences implementing our educational system's new curriculum-the K to12 Curriculum. Their experiences were the foundation of their manifestations in terms of behavior and personality and the bases of their testimonies and expressions. I am also a teacher who has close contact and connection with the participants. It was my edge that the participants comfortably share their experiences during the interview.

Confirmability. Confirmability was the degree to which other people could confirm the results and is also associated with the study's objectivity (Trochim, 2006). It is also concerned with the aspect of neutrality (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Thus, this study's findings were not from the researchers' own opinions and sentiments as emphasized by Shenton (2004) but rather from the participants themselves. I gathered the necessary information for this study, assuring the confidentiality of participants' responses and documents during the interview. Hence, a thorough description of how the data gathering went, especially on what happened during the actual interview, was provided.

With the applied measures, this present study is a comparable model for ensuring trustworthiness.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration is one of the essential components in doing qualitative research because Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) stated that it considers human subjects' protection and considers what constitutes socially responsible and acceptable research. At any instance, I firmly believe the words of

Munhall (1988), Petrova, Dewing, & Camilleri (2016) that qualitative researchers must always consider anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent of the participants.

This study necessitated the participation of the vital school administrator participants in the interview.

Anonymity. It means that each participant's information is contained and enshrouded from any individual to guarantee to protect the participants' privacy (Vasilateanu & Casaru, 2015). The school administrators were invited to participate in the interview where ethical principles such as respect of human rights, understanding their feeling, and protecting each participant's identity, including the place and the research location, were taken into full account by the researcher. Participants' personal information was deleted and replaced with codes to ensure their names, place, and other concerns were discreet.

Confidentiality. As the researcher, I must protect each participant's identity, place, and research location. "A careful planning and conduct of the research will be set forth and taken into considerations first and even up to the presentation, interpretation, and publication of results" (Tudy, 2017, p.105). It ensured to evade breach of confidentiality. I saw to it that the gathered data and information were kept secure and were not divulged in any ways to anyone.

Informed Consent. It adheres to providing the practicalities' issues in deriving the desired data, information recording consent, collecting/using data, privacy, confidentiality, potential risks, and benefits (Harriss & Atkinson, 2015). Before the conduct of the study, participants received an informed consent from which contains the following: the purpose of the study, time/length of the interview, procedures, risks, and benefits, and an explanation including the voluntary involvement of the participants, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw of participation from the study.

RESULTS

Based on the study's purpose, thorough data analyses were from the participants' responses from the Key Informant Interview were repeatedly done. The following results presented here are placed into three clusters based on the two research questions of the study. The first part centered on the difficulties experienced by the public elementary school administrators in implementing the K to12 curriculum. The second cluster focused on school administrators' coping strategies on the difficulties they encountered in implementing the new curriculum.

Difficulties experienced by the public elementary school administrators in the implementation of the K to12 curriculum

When asked about their difficulties experienced in the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum, there emerged from the participants' responses the following themes, as found in table one: (1) scarcity of necessary materials, (2) lack of essential training and orientation, (3) low quality of needed materials, and (4) additional workload for school administrators.

Lack of Essential Training and Orientation. Of all the difficulties school administrators experienced, a lack of essential training and orientation came out to be dominant. An awakening response of 100 percent or twelve (12) out of the twelve participants (12) identified such difficulty.

The school administrators were adjusting to a new trend set by the Department of Education. They needed essential training to be fully aware and oriented about the features of the new curriculum. However, participants were unanimous in saying that they did not receive much. One of them shared this statement with assertiveness in tone that there is "*Lack of planning preparation in terms of school administrators' nga mura bitaw og dapat unta* (such as) *series of seminars and information drive before*

the implementation (Par, transcript 4, lines 9-10). All of them unanimously stated that their training was not sufficient to get them ready for the implementation. Not all training conducted was attended by all school administrators, especially in the different grade level training. The mentioned reasons were that there were differences in the interpretation and application in implementing the curriculum. Though DepEd conducted training, all were about conceptual frameworks or the "what," not the "how."

School administrators felt almost the same experience with teachers regarding training, especially in Information and Communications Technology (ICT). With the new strategies to be employed in the new curriculum, school administrators found it difficult to motivate teachers to be persistent and diligent in their work, accompanied by some teachers' complaints of teaching all learning areas in a day. They felt difficulty on the curriculum's transition and even brought confusions in responding to these experiences' implementation queries.

Scarcity of Learning Materials. One of the shared experiences among school administrators was the scarcity of necessary materials. They battled on the insufficiency of textbooks, activity sheets, and other related learning references. *"We cannot fully implement things if we have the scarcity of necessary materials* (Win, transcript 3, line 10)". These materials the participant referred to is the insufficient and inefficient distribution of instructional materials such as books, teachers' guide TGs), learners' materials (LM), and other references, including ICT-related materials. It resulted in resistance of some teachers in the implementation. The absence of these materials made it the school administrators challenging to go over teachers' work.

The materials needed for discussions, implementation of the lessons, and even activities were minimal from the school administrators' perspectives. The provisions of these materials were only a few until now. They could not fully implement things in the curriculum if materials were scarce.

Poorness in Quality of Learning Materials. Though it is a requirement for learning material to sustain years of usage, the participants still noticed that the learning devices were of low quality. They said that textbooks were not in hard-bound copies. It resulted in being damaged easily and found out that the books before were better. One participant even took a sample of the learners' material and showed how frustrated was she while turning some of the torn pages. The dismay can be seen in her facial expression and with a statement that "*Ang textbook nila kay softbound dali ra magisi dili pareho sa una nga lig-on. Karon pag pakli pa lang wan-a, buak."* (The given textbooks were soft bounded and easily torn, unlike before which were durable.) (Ann, transcript 8, lines 66-67).

Thus, school administrators realized that quality materials were essential in implementing the new curriculum's goals, especially books and even computers.

Addition of Workloads. As described, this referred to the new scheme in the preparation and liquidation of Mandatory and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE), the new method of checking the Daily Lesson Log (DLL), and the difficulty of accomplishing other thrusts of DepEd.

Seven (7) of the twelve (12) participants mutually shared that there has been an addition of works upon the implementation of the K to12 curriculum. Two of them bluntly said with a sigh that: *"Mas nidaghan ang among trabaho karon kay sa dili pa K to 12*." (There were several other works added now compared before the implementation of K to 12.) (Par, KII 4, transcript 4, line 178). Surprisingly, school administrators needed to attend to the clamors from both parents and teachers regarding the use of the mother tongue as medium of instruction and as a subject. One participant shared her experience from their parents saying "*Daghang reklamo sa parents nga moingon "mam oy unsa naman ni inyong Math dili naman me kabalo aning onse…unsa ni siya nga number". So didto daghang clamors sa mga parents*

*(*Several parents claimed that they do not know the lessons in Math like eleven as onse, what is this number?) (*Ann, transcript 8, line 21-22).* One participant also added that "*Ang pag observe pud nako sa mga teacher's kay lahi man gud ang approach karon sa K to 12. Example sa Grade 1 kay lahi ang binisaya nga gigamit sa books ug ang language nato diri sa balay ug ang dialect nga gigamit sa mga bata sa balay. Ang standard nga gamit baya sa curriculum kay Sinugbuanong Binisaya pero ang atoa baya kay Dabaweñong Binisaya, so naa gyuy language barrier nga maglisud og sabot ang bata* (There is a language barrier because the approach and standard of K to 12 in the use of mother tongue is different from the language used by the school children and the community.) *(Uno, transcript 2, lines 8-12).*

Furthermore, they mentioned in detailed what other works were added such that aside from studying the new entries in the DLL, there was a new scheme of liquidating the MOOE. From the planning and crafting of the School Improvement Plan (SIP), which is the basis of liquidating the monetary subsidy of the school was already a tedious work to do which in turn a day is not enough. However, they had to accomplish it in due time not to affect the teachers' Performance-Based Bonus (PBB). One of the participants added that though it is part of their responsibilities, she felt guilty and had difficulty finding her essence as an instructional leader. Most of the time, she spent in MOOE liquidation, seminars, and training. Thus, these responsibilities forced them to perform even they were on leave from their duty.

These schemes have not been experienced before. Thus, school administrators considered the responsibilities as mentioned earlier as burdensome and felt guilty at some point because they had mostly left out their primary role in the school-being of an instructional leader.

Coping strategies of the public elementary school administrators in dealing with the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the K to12 Program

The following themes emerged when asked about the participants' coping strategies in dealing with the difficulties on the implementation of K to 12 – (1) innovative strategy, (2) social support system, and (3) personal coping strategy.

Innovative Strategies. It is the dominant strategy employed by school administrators in coping with their experienced difficulties**.** All participants (12 out 12) put into effect this strategy: the school administrators' ability to manage versatility on technology integration, alternative reading aids, forum and symposium, and allocation of funds for educational purposes.

Most of the participants advised the teachers to use and provide their laptops, which were useful in the teaching and learning process. There were mostly learning areas that need the incorporation of ICT in delivering the instructions. As firmly articulated by one of the participants saying, *"Akong gi required ang mga teachers to provide their laptop aron makatudlo gihapon sila sa mga subject nga kinahanglan ang presence sa computer*." (I required the teachers to provide their laptops to teach still the subjects that need the presence of computers.) (Par, transcript 4, lines 164-165). On the other hand, the school's initiative in conducting forum and symposium helped school administrators clear the parents' doubts and inquiries about the new curriculum. Even staying long in their offices turned out to be helpful in facing the parents' queries about the implementation.

Another innovative strategy employed by the participants was allocating funds and having personal expenses for learning materials. Still, as observed, the funds were not sufficient, so their teachers needed to spend from their own pockets to meet the school needs. Hence, school administrators tried to do their best to properly allocate the MOOE funds to provide the implementation deficiencies and be accompanied by innovations. It helped them get through the situation.

Social Support System. In coping with the difficulties encountered, school administrators had exerted specific efforts that allowed the workforce to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize problems. The participants came up with mechanisms allowing them to minimize difficulties. The social support system is one of their coping strategies composed of motivational strategy, the conduct of Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, the delegation of works in alleviating their heavy workloads, and community linkages and parents' collaboration.

Motivational strategy as imparted by school administrators was the encouragement given to their teachers. They acted as good sources of motivation to teachers to make works easier amidst problems and challenges. They had to overcome the difficulties brought by teachers' resistance towards the change of curriculum. The participants were unanimous in stating that they motivated their workforce to continue doing the task despite challenges, and it proved to have a positive effect on teachers' work attitude. One of them positively stated, *"I motivate the teachers to do their job. If you do not motivate these people, nothing will happen on the implementation of the new curriculum"* (Win, transcript 3, lines 41-43). Most of them supported the teachers through mentoring and coaching and encouraged them to adapt to the trends. Learning Action Cell Sessions (LAC) had been conducted to seek strategies and suggestions among the workforce, which alleviated teachers' burdens on the new curriculum through the system of delegation of workloads. Instead of facilitating the LAC sessions, master teachers acted as facilitators in the session. Competent ICT coordinators were given under load to spend with the school administrator doing ICT-related works and reports.

Besides, school administrators made strong linkages to the community and asked for support from the parents. They needed to link to the parents for help because the school alone cannot supply the needs. Moreover, they had connected to the Local Government Units and Barangay Leaders for further assistance because they could not cater to the needs of the learning environment by themselves. Strong community linkages and stakeholder partnerships helped the school administrators provide the school's needs, especially to the learners' needs.

Personal Coping Strategies. This strategy is best known as self-coping mechanisms. It was through teachers' translanguage methods, self-studying and researching on the new curriculum. Translanguaging as used in this study is the act performed by teachers using two or more languages, preferably the language used in the community to easily convey meanings to the learners.

Though there were teachers, parents and even learners had a negative thought of the language used in the LMs as shared by one participant that "*Naglisud ko unsaon nako pagtabang sa akong maestra kay akong maestra Ilokano din naa tay MTB. Dili gyud siya kasabot sa Bisaya (Glen, transcript 5, lines 34-35)"* but I observed in their responses that they use translanguaging as self-mechanism. Teachers somehow interpreted the terms used in the Sinugbuanong Binisaya LMs and translated them into words commonly used in the community for learners to understand. *"Teachers are kana bang ilahang i-interpret (interpreting) the words used in the reference nga (which is) Sinugbuanong Binisaya nga LMs, they use the term, but they equate it with the word used in the community* (*Dacy, transcript 12, line 128-129)."*

Moreover, the school administrators coped through self-updating. They did self-research to update the new educational trends and personally studied the curriculum guide to know and be updated with their responsibilities and the teachers' works. From this view, computers and internet connection helped the school administrators lift their knowledge of the department's current and new course that has something to do with their responsibilities being the school's face.

Hence, research participants made a way to cope with implementing the K to 12 program. They used various means of reducing the difficulties they were facing. They had interpersonal, intrapersonal, and innovative mechanisms or strategies muddle through mentioned difficulties.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the difficulties and coping strategies of the K to 12 implementation from the perspectives of those who took charge of implementing the school level- the school administrators. School administrators are school leaders who experienced difficulties while leading their schools towards excellence. Thus, this study's results revealed that K to 12 brought challenges to school administrators.

Difficulties experienced by public elementary school administrators in the implementation of the K to12 curriculum

Principals in today's schools were not prepared for the task at hand. They were confronted with various issues as they provide leadership and organization to their schools (Tobin, 2014), which exacerbate the new curriculum's implementation. It supported one of the results of this study. The dominant difficulty school administrators experienced in implementing the K to 12 curriculum was the lack of essential training and orientations. Training and orientations were indispensable in a workplace because they laid the foundation of an employee's new career (Oregon State University, 2018). However, public elementary school administrators identified that they lacked training that resulted in difficulties in implementing the new curriculum tasks. Most of them had not attended all the training pertaining to the implementation of the curriculum. It resulted in unanswered queries of stakeholders and confusion on the standards of enrollment among learners. Also, MTB's utilization as a subject and a medium of instruction brought a loud noise in the implementation. It was because there had been no proper dissemination and clear understanding of how was *Sinugbuanong Binisaya* as used in the LMs be transpired to the pupils' everyday language.

Moreover, though trained school leaders are needed, there must be strengthened teachers' training on pedagogy and understanding the whole reform concept. Alegado (2018) stated that the need for teacher training is the accustomed answer to poor student performance in public schools based on the students' scores from the annual National Achievement Test (NAT). Poor performance of students was the result of the weak connection between course content and classroom activities, as shown by teachers (Arlestig, 2012), specifically to those who taught content not aligned to their pre-service education. Another reason was there were still several schools whose teachers were untrained in the K to 12 curriculum. This picture brought worry to Senator Pia Cayetano who said that schools should acknowledge that training is needed, and people need to see actual training happening now (Geronimo, 2015). However, DepEd promised to afford teachers with training to equip them on K to 12 Program. In the same manner, it vowed to work with the Commission on Higher Education to make sure the Teacher Education course meets the needed standards. It will make the training and workshops accessible to new teachers to deliver the best learning to students and residents (K12 Philippines, 2015).

Another difficulty was the scarcity of learning materials. They had insufficient textbooks, learning aids, and even electronic materials needed for the implementation. Learning materials pertained to teachers' educational materials' amplitude to achieve specific teaching-learning processes (Lewis, 2018). Based on this study's results, there was an inefficient distribution of LMs and even until this moment, not all grade levels had the complete LMs, mainly textbooks. Thus, Taboh (2015) exclaimed in her article that lacking school materials hinders students' success. These resources the school administrators were referring to were learning materials, the need for additional teachers, enough classrooms, and ICT related resources (Bala, 2017; Basilio, 2018; Brooks et al., 2014; Cabili et al.; Koh et al., 2014; RazzHowever, as, 2015). The presence of these resources was necessary because UNESCO (2012) stressed out that students' performance was severely dependent on whether they had the opportunity to see and handle the equipment, chemicals, and specimens. Hence, adequate teaching and

learning resources should be provided, and more funds to be allocated for procuring teaching and learning materials. But the problem was, even though government officials pushed the importance of education, they did not exert effort to make sure that the education they value was received (Taboh, 2015). And school administrators had to face this concern.

Additionally, the results also revealed that materials needed in the learning environment were of poor quality. Thus, these materials should be of a high-end quality to sustain for years and be usable for the school, the teachers, and the students. Tearing off pages from the textbook should be avoided as far as possible (Textbook Committee, Education Bureau, 2016) because loosely bound textbooks will discourage students from studying them (Das, 2015). Moreover, electronic learning materials or e-LMs such as computers should have good Random-Access Memory (RAM) and a sound processor (Sorte, 2018) to function well and last long. Therefore, the government should increase funding for high-quality resources to improve education (Amato, 2015).

Moreover, a surprising difficulty they had was the addition of workloads, particularly in the liquidation of MOOE. Sparks (2016) supported this result based on his study that most school principals took their time with administrative tasks, such as paperwork and scheduling. I observed several other reports our school leaders needed to accomplish, and it hindered the main reason they were in school-being an instructional leader. NSW Department of Education (2017) supported the mentioned personal experience that principals were spending more time leading the school's management than leading teaching and learning. This responsibility was considered time-consuming (Lindberg, 2014) as there were many acute problems that principals needed to attend to. The government and its concerned agencies should listen to school leaders' concerns and be responsive to them (Derrington & Campbell, 2015) to scaffold their teachers well towards improving the implementation of the reform. Without proper, adequate, and excellent support, desired reforms in schools are far at hand.

Coping strategies of the public elementary school administrators in dealing with the difficulties encountered in implementing the K to 12 program

This study's results revealed school administrators' coping strategies to address the difficulties they encountered in implementing K to 12 curriculum. Coping strategies were the effort made by an individual, healthy, or unhealthy, conscious, or unconscious, to prevent, eliminate or weaken stressors or tolerate effects in the least harmful manner (Matheny et al., 1986 as cited in Abbas and Roger, 2013). This is linked to Cowan's Complexity theory which explained that an organism sensed and responded to its environment. Thus, changing its environment enabled the organism to react and adjust to suit the new environment. In this study, the change of curriculum made the school administrators find ways to cope with the challenges they encountered in the new set up of the new schemes of their work and environment for them to function well.

Employing innovative strategies were their dominant ways of coping. One way of carrying this strategy was through the integration of technology. Osiyemi (2016) stated that e-LMs could play an extensive part in education if adequately adopted. Thus, the participants made ways to have an internet connection in their schools. Teachers were advised to have their laptops in the delivery of instruction and easy access to available resources. Proper allocation of school funds will realize the needed learning materials, but Malito (2018) stressed out that public schools did spent their own money to make their classrooms more conducive for learning. Furthermore, conducting alternative reading aids or centers was an approach of school administrators to lessen the number of learners at risk of reading. For some, especially in the United States, the term alternative refers to educational settings geared towards students whose needs cannot be met in the traditional school, such as underachievers who do not qualify for special education (K12Academics, 2019).

On the other hand, school administrators' high communication skills are likely to contribute to better functioning in the administration processes (Memduhoglu, 2015). Thus, the participants were able to convey the parents and stakeholders on the new issuances of DepEd pertained to the K to 12 implementation by conducting forum and symposium. It was done for parents to have a clear understanding of the implementation.

School administrators employed social support system as another means of coping. Supportive environments strengthened social support function and connected social support resources self-management behaviors (Chen, Chang, Liu, Ho, Weng, & Tsai, 2018). School administrators dealt with the hardships by motivating the teachers through technical assistance and mentoring. Sidikova (2011) concluded in his study that motivation was a significant force that enabled workers fully involved in projects and committed to even unexpected future. LAC sessions conducted helped school administrators cope with teachers' difficulties in new strategies to be employed in their teaching. Guttierez (2015) found that teachers and knowledgeable others shared their problems and discovered connections between the lesson and pupils' learning outcomes, leading to possible changes in teachers' practices. Master teachers were delegated as facilitators on the sessions. Thus, research has shown that leaders who delegated have higher effectiveness rates (Drescher, 2017). Campbill (2018) stated that delegating more work would provide an avenue for new skills. New leaders would emerge as they felt trusted and respected; thus, responsibility was less but organized. When done successfully, this would be beneficial to the entire educational system. Also, schools do not exist in isolation and cannot go it alone (National Dropout Prevention Center, 2019); school administrators-built bridges to the community and asked for support from the parents. Administrators did it because Gross (2015) found that school community partnerships played an essential role in successful schools, often provided support and resources that met staff, family, and student needs beyond what is typically available through the school. With the help of this, school administrators reduced the burden of implementing and supporting the said curriculum.

Another means of coping done by school administrators was personal coping. Several studies point out what personal coping is but, in this study, it was the strategy done by school administrators that had a direct positive effect on themselves. According to Allen and Leary (2010), it could be related to self-compassion, as it involved a desire to do what is best for oneself and minimize one's future suffering. Based on this study's results, I found out that most school administrators used their translanguage strategies as one of their self-mechanism in dealing with the difficulty in implementing K to 12. Translanguaging is about making connections between ideas that others' voices be heard (Garcia, 2009). Self-studying was another personal coping strategy referred to as self-directed learning by Van Rensburg and Botma (2015). One's own learning needs were identified, developed, and implemented to gain knowledge and monitor one's progress. School administrators did research and self-study to fully understand the new curriculum and cope with the training they had not attended. With these, they were able to bridge the gap between diversity training and diversity performance.

Limitation of the Study

This study focused only on public elementary school administrators' difficulties and coping strategies upon implementing the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, known as the K to12 Curriculum in the Philippines. The results of this paper were based on studies using a qualitative approach and experiences of the twelve (12) informants who were spearheading either central or big schools as identified by the office of the division of Davao del Sur and with at least three years (3) years of experience as a school administrator. It excluded the experiences of public-school administrators in the small and primary schools.

Implications of the Study

Based on the results and discussion on the participants' responses, school administrators in the public elementary schools faced different difficulties in implementing the K to 12 curriculum in the

country but somehow found alternative ways of coping. Thus, this study could provide useful data for school administrators to find ways and processes on how to overcome struggles in curriculum shifting. This study may also give an overview of the challenges a school administrator might face when implementing a new curriculum and what qualities they must possess to withstand such challenges. It would also pave the way for a clear understanding to teachers that administrators too struggled in many ways during changes in the educative process. Teachers may then be enlightened that school administrators had employed strategies to the best they could to cope with their difficulties and the entire academe. This study's results may possibly help resolve their clamors against their school leaders concerning how they handled the reform.

Moreover, it had been seen that scarcity of materials and lack of essential training were two of the most noted struggles our school administrators were facing. Therefore, this research may serve as a wake-up call to DepEd authorities to realize what happens in the field during the implementation and raise and allocate budget for the implementation's necessary matters. School administrators and teachers may also be given quarterly seminars and training to discover new trends in education. Additional personnel also may be provided to every school to help the school administrators with their paper works. In this manner, administrators could focus on their primary function as instructional leaders and seeking help from the teachers in doing tasks on their behalf may be avoided.

Though translanguaging was used as strategy to easily deliver the lessons, the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction and learning area in the primary grades brought a massive concern to school administrators, teachers, pupils, and parents most especially to the community with different mother tongue. With this, curriculum experts may review the curriculum's standards and provide more comprehensive learning resources considering the diversity of learners. Policymakers may even use this study as a lens on how they could ensure that all requisites on a new policy must have been provided and prepared before the implementation to minimize such difficulties based on this study's results.

Hence, the results were not meant to be generalized but rather to bridge to future research. It would be interesting to see other studies among private schools' experiences on implementing K to 12 since experiences shared in this study were from public school administrators. The teachers' experiences in private and public schools would also entice them to study and even investigate the students' difficulties and coping strategies who underwent the curriculum to see the problem from a different perspective.

Concluding Remarks

Leading academe has never been easy, most especially in times of curriculum change. Though both the government and its governing agency- DepEd, spawned their efforts to be armed before the new curriculum bedded in, still challenges in the implementation were undeniable. School administrators were confronted with a scarcity of learning materials during the implementation of the new curriculum. They lacked essential training and orientations that would serve as their foundation for the new curriculum. Although it is very vivid that schools needed good quality learning materials, the participants still noticed poorness in the quality of textbooks and electronic materials handed by the government. Surprisingly, school administrators did not anticipate the additional workloads they needed to implement the new curriculum. It made them feel guilty because of the many other jobs and thrusts of the government entrusted to them, which made them left behind their primary function of being instructional leaders. However, these difficulties did not hinder the school administrators from backing off from their duties and responsibilities.

Despite the difficulties of implementing the K to 12 curriculum, school administrators' coping strategies were discovered, which helped them get through on their present situation. They coped using their social support systems and innovative strategies; however, some were good at working individually or employing self-coping strategies. These coping strategies geared the school administrators to the well-

being of the entire school and served as their weapon on strengthening the implementation of the new curriculum.

The difficulties mentioned above and the coping strategies of school administrators on implementing K to 12 curriculum gave us a realization that overcoming these struggles during change could not be done alone. It is a shared responsibility and could not be achieved without the cooperation among teachers, students, and school administrators. If done, a sound and conducive learning community could be propagated.

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FEARS, MOTIVATION, AND STRATEGIES OF GUIDANCE COUNSELORS IN HANDLING CLIENTS WITH SUICIDAL TENDENCIES

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ABSTRACT

Across the globe, suicide is now a typical behavior among the youth in the contemporary period. This phenomenon challenges school guidance counselors on how they reach out to suicidal clients effectively. However, as they help suicidal clients overcome their unresolved issues, they are also vulnerable to the counseling sessions. The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to explore the fears, motivations, and strategies of guidance counselors in handling clients with suicidal tendencies. Using purposive sampling, nine (9) key informants willingly participated in the semi-structured interviews. Results revealed three themes as regards their fears. They were (1) apprehensive about suicidal clients' wellbeing, (2) occupational vulnerability, and the (3) adverse effects of counseling suicidal clients. Furthermore, there were two emerging themes as regards their motivations. These were (1) professional calls to help and (2) counseling as an instrument for change. Lastly, two themes were extracted fortheir strategies, namely, (1) reliance on counseling tools and techniques and (2) provision of a support system.

Keywords: *Guidance and counseling, suicide, phenomenology, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges that school guidance counselors face in the contemporary period is handling clients with suicidal tendencies. The occurrences of this phenomenon among adolescents of both sexes and across all racial and ethnic groups are well documented by several studies (Barna & Brott, 2012; Buchanan, 2014; Choate, 2012; Kung et al., 2018; Muehlenkamp, Walsh & McDade, 2010; Supple, et al., 2013). It is indeed unfortunate that suicide is now a typical behavior among the youth. For this reason, counseling professionals are working assiduously in providing help among suicidal youths in the contemporary period.

However, lurking in this situation's shadows are the fears that linger on counseling professionals' mental state. Meyers (2015) stated that the possibility of having a client die by suicide is a specter that hovers in the background for many counseling professionals. The higher level of perceived stress they experience, which causes a wide range of long-lasting reactions

and changes in the working practices upon handling clients' suicidal behavior, affects them the most (Gulfi et al., 2015; Ting, Jacobson & Sanders, 2011). This crisis makes clinicians frightful in conducting counseling sessions. As they help their suicidal clients overcome their prevailing concerns, they become susceptible to the psychological impact of handling such cases.

The vulnerability of counseling professionals is marked by the predisposed fears of counseling suicidal clients. The precipitating factor is due to their anxieties. They are afraid that they might mess up facilitating clients' overwhelming emotions and the counseling session, which would lead them to get worse from their current situation (Blow, 2017; Jobes, 2016). This scenario typically happens because of self-doubt, a factor that holds people back (Nissen-Lie et al., 2017). This makes guidance counselors, novice or seasoned, vulnerable in the conduct of counseling sessions (Dailey, 2018; Psychology Today, 2018; Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2014; Smith, 2017). That is why dealing with suicidal clients is not just an easy task among guidance counselors. It takes to have an excellent mental fortitude for them to safeguard their emotional status quo.

It is indeed a nightmare to observe our clients devalue life because of their unresolved issues. The dilemma of whether we could handle them effectively relies solely on the knowledge we have in counseling. For almost three years, the thing that distresses us the most is our fear of taking them. The tyranny of what-ifs is governing my mind. Hence, this particular situation embarks this study's purpose, which is to explore the fears, motivations, and strategies of guidance counselors in handling clients with suicidal tendencies. Not only that this would help to suffice the gaps in this field since many studies illustrated statistical data of students with suicidal tendencies from its nature and relevance, whereas few touches guidance counselors' experiences, but also it may become an impetus to advance the knowledge concerning the vulnerability of counseling professionals in handling suicidal cases.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section presents various literature related to the study. It discusses guidance counselors' role, suicide as a mental health issue, and guidance counselors' experiences, such as their fears, motivations, and strategies implied when dealing with clients with suicidal tendencies.

Role of the Guidance Counselors

Guidance counselors, a vital component of the school's institution, are the ones who facilitate students' emotional, educational, personal-social, and vocational problems (Eremie, 2014; Low, 2015; Nadon, Samson, Gazzola&Thériault, 2016; Nguyen, Dedding, Pham, Wright & Bunders, 2013). They help address students' academic, career, social and emotional development to become productive and well-adjusted adults of tomorrow (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2018). Guidance counselors are geared towards providing students their guidance needs, such as resolving students' emotional, educational and personal-social problems (Eremie, 2014). They are a vital component of the school as they promote students' overall development (Nadon, Samson, Gazzola&Thériault, 2016). School guidance counselors exist to help the teachers and school administrators deal with students' psychological needs.

Though there may be differences in expression, some established organizations and associations agree on school guidance counselors' roles in supporting students' educational, career, and personal/social development. These include legal and ethical services delivered directly to and on behalf of students, guidance through program curriculum and individual planning, and individual and group counseling (ASCA, 2012). It means to say that guidance counselors' roles and responsibilities are universal, most of which facilitate emotional concerns.

In dealing with clients' wellbeing, guidance counselors establish school counseling programs. A study entitled Malaysian Students' Perceptions of Counseling Services in an Institution of Higher Learning found that counseling services are vitally important and must be available for students in higher learning institutions (Sedhu, 2013). Moreover, its importance is justified by Johnson, Nelson, and Henriksen (2011). They stated that implementing guidance programs will negate problems evident in the public school system, such as emotional problems, high drop-outs, etc. In articulating further the role of counselors in counseling programs, students are assisted in making decisions about personal, social, and educational issues (Demir & Can, 2015; Mah, 2015). Therefore, guidance counselors are crucial in the school system since helping students with their concerns may result in more significant academic efforts without compromising other factors such as their psychological make-up.

Suicide as a Mental Health Issue

Suicide is a kind of phenomenon which is not new anymore. Mental health advocates intensely feel its impact. DSM-5 describes suicide as an act of ending one's life and individuals with suicidal tendencies intended to inflict self-harm (APA, 2013; WHO, 2016). To escape from the pain of reality, clients resort to harming themselves, a cruel way to devalue life.

Several studies can validate the occurrences of suicide as a phenomenon. This particular behavior is now typical in adolescents of both sexes and across all racial and ethnic groups (Choate, 2012; Kung et al., 2018; Muehlenkamp, Walsh & McDade, 2010; Supple et al., 2013). Specifically, it is prevalent among American, Vietnamese, and Japanese people. Compared to neighboring ASEAN countries, the Philippines is less affected (Bonalos & Tordecilla, 2016; Butuyan, 2016; Emory University, 2016; Lapeña, 2015; Lu, 2015; Nguyen, Dedding, Pham, Wright & Bunders, 2013; Vila, 2014). It is astounding to reveal that suicide is indeed a mental health issue that affects most populations. It chooses no one.

In a school setting, suicide is the number one prevailing concern among guidance counselors. A study entitled Depression and Suicide Ideation among Students Accessing Campus Health Care revealed that thought of suicide was higher for men (13%) than women (10%) among college campuses (Mackenzie et al., 2011). According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2015), suicide has become the leading cause of college students' death. Hence, these statistical data are critical to be disseminated, especially among school administrators, so they will intensify their programs that are critical for this issue on hand that endangers students' academic journey.

Schools are trying their best effort to address suicide. A study stated teachers' role in addressing this risk, such as giving insights, although it caused them anxiety and fear upon handling suicidal students (Buchanan & Harris, 2014). Moreover, it is suggested that the schools

have suicide screening programs to identify mental health issues and prevent death by suicide (Torcasso& Hilt, 2017). Despite such efforts, Lecloux, Maramaldi, Thomas, and Wharff (2017) revealed that suicidal youth are particularly unlikely to receive mental health treatment. It is indeed a sad reality depicted that even these roles are intensified; suicide is still part of human life choices, a particular point of view that should never happen.

In the Philippine context, suicide cases are booming. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) report in 2014, there were 2,558 mental health-related suicide cases among Filipinos in 2012 alone. This data, including other significant information, led Senator Risa Hontiveros to author its Mental Health Law. It seeks to cement the government's commitment to a more holistic approach to healthcare. It firmly believes that without sound mental health, there can be no genuine physical health. It provides mental health services down to the barangays, integrates psychiatric, psychosocial, and neurologic services in regional, provincial, and tertiary hospitals; improve the country's mental health care facilities; and promote mental health education in schools and workplaces (Varona, 2018). This law ignites the hope of protecting Filipinos' mental health needs, especially those seeing their lives' final curtains.

Experiences of Guidance Counselors

This portion discusses the experiences of guidance counselors in handling clients with suicidal tendencies. Specifically, it presents various concepts and studies about their fears, motivations, and strategies.

Fears. School guidance counselors are faced with student suicidal ideation regularly. A study conducted by Rothes, Scheerder, Van Audenhove& Henriques (2013) identified ninety-eight psychiatrists who had been confronted with at least one patient suicide. This situation embarked emotional suffering ineffectiveness. Wurst et al. (2011) revealed that a substantial proportion of therapists would, at some point in their professional life, experiences the loss of a patient to suicide. This particular experience creates anxiety among guidance counselors, such as having apprehension for their client's wellbeing. The uncertainty of what will happen after the counseling session or its aftermath affects guidance counselors the most.

It is also distressing among guidance counselors to deal with clients with suicidal tendencies. A particular study's thesis statement said that the suicide of a psychiatric patient was seen as the 'therapist's failure.' The 'blame and shame' stigma attributed to the therapist of the deceased client, originated from both the surviving family members and within the mental health profession itself, is disturbing counselor's psychological make-up (Weiner, 2005 as cited by Hawgood & de Leo, 2015). After a client's suicide attempt, therapists may experience increased personal self-doubt, negative or ambivalent feelings towards the patient. If negative counter transference arises, therapist reactions can have devastating impacts on client care when left unprocessed (Hawgood & de Leo, 2015). All of these lead the therapist to experience some degree of trepidation (Griffin, 2011). Thus, counselors' mental state may be at risk when dealing with clients with suicidal tendencies.

A study in 2006 found that therapists usually experience fear of incompetence. This happens whenever they handle cases in which they are not well-acquainted, they feel incompetent to deal with it. Alongside physical exhaustion coming from the demand of their

work, it leads them to professional burnout (Bardhoshi, Schweinle& Duncan, 2014; Lent and Schwartz, 2012; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016; Wardle & Mayorga, 2016). However, a descriptive study conducted by Thériault&Gazzola, 2010) revealed that this kind of fear could serve as an inspiration among counselors to study harder, participate in additional training, and seek supervision from experienced professionals. This can be done by managing events that serve as triggers identified by Smith (2017), such as difficult content, a developmental plateau, or something as simple as not knowing where to go or what to say next in a session. These lead counselors to respond to such moments by pushing forward into the discomfort or turning away from the opportunity and detaching. Thus, assessing counselors' mental state before and after the conduct of counseling session is suggested to avoid this kind of threat that may affect guidance counselors' wellbeing.

According to Smith (2017), one of the prevailing factors why guidance counselors develop fear is self-doubt. This is explained by their lack of knowledge in dealing with clients' concerns. They are afraid that they might mess up and get it wrong, which would lead clients to worsen (Blow, 2017). This self-doubt as fear is universal and part of the first developmental phase of becoming a therapist. It is indeed a severe problem because it holds people back (Nissen-Lie et al., 2017). However, real confidence comes with time and experience and will only come when one dares to test their selves and allow their clients to move in profound ways (Dailey, 2018).

In counseling, clients are not the only ones who are vulnerable. Guidance counselors might be affected whenever there is a fear of rejection. During their counseling session, counselors' vulnerability can lead to disconnection, incongruence, and feelings of isolation (Smith, 2017). If such fear is present, then it may cause individuals to hide personal flaws. Hence, it does not foster an environment of mutual empathy and empowerment between counselor and client, taming the counseling session's objectives.

Meyers (2015), in her article entitled Facing the Specter of Client Suicide, stated that the possibility of having a client die by suicide is a specter that hovers in the background for many counseling professionals. It is perhaps the crisis that clinicians are most afraid of. Even so, client suicide is a subject often laden with shame, guilt, denial, and many other difficult emotions — emotions that counselors excel at helping others handle but would much rather not face in themselves, say researchers and practitioners who have lost clients to suicide. Practitioners may also attempt to process a client's suicide in solitude because they are unsure where to turn and fear possible judgment from colleagues.

Therapists who treat suicidal clients share the process and the experience. A therapist's professional expertise is invested in the prevention of suicide, and when a client takes his own life, the therapist often experiences an accompanying sense of failure. Therapists face several dilemmas as a result of their wish to be responsible and caring practitioners. However, no matter how much they care, people still commit suicide (Rossouw, Smythe & Greener, 2011).

Suicidal ideation is one of the most common forms of crisis in therapy sessions that cause many clinicians great anxiety during and between sessions. Therefore, clinicians need to have a greater understanding of risk factors for suicide and how to deal with concerns for clients

between sessions (Sharry, Darmody & Madden, 2002 as cited in Karakurt et al., 2014). This is an important note that should not be overlooked.

Motivations. "For the general population, suicide is often a silent tragedy. For the media, it is a treacherous taboo. For those of us in the mental health professions, it is an alarming occupational hazard and the most common psychiatric emergency we face. Although we as clinicians cannot prevent all suicides, we can lessen the number of suicides" (Firestone, 2014, p. 1). This statement embarks on the purpose of why this study seeks its goal. Dealing with clients' wellbeing is not an easy task. It takes resiliency among guidance counselors and strong motivation to continue handling them.

Dealing with suicidal clients is an occupational hazard. It is the most stressful part of the counselors' job due to its increasing frequency and significant impact both personally and professionally (Veilleux, 2011). Whenever they work with a suicidal client, therapists' lingering effects can include feeling guilty, angry, depressed, and self-blaming. These lead them to some degree of trepidation. Therapists have a profound responsibility when treating someone who is in such extraordinary pain (Griffin, 2011). If not handled properly, it may fluctuate their motivation to counsel.

Despite having these negative experiences, counselors and other allied professional continues to do their job because of a specific moral obligation to make their clients feel alive. Firestone (2014) said that the therapist's first contact with a suicidal person could be the only contact they have with them. The initial session could be their only chance at intervention and treatment. This paves the way for one of their motivations in conducting a counseling session. They hope that they passed to their clients to see the bright light of life from its darkest moments.

Dealing with suicidal cases brought counselors and other allied mental health practitioners to become motivated to perform their work line. For instance, the loss of client due to suicide, the high percentage of working with clients who have attempted suicide and commits suicide, and those who received less mental health treatment (Sawyer, Peters & Willis, 2013; Schmitz et al., 2012). The frequency of suicide, alongside its irrevocable and painful outcomes, becomes a general issue among helping professionals (Montague, Cassidy & Liles, 2016). Thus, it becomes their unwritten role to be motivated to help clients survive the phenomenon they are facing.

Strategies. Suicidal clients have a hard time seeking mental help. It is because of the typical responses he or she has received from relatives and friends, such as being perceived as irrational, trying to get attention, not being taken seriously, or potentially being punished, added to their emotional conflict and brings the worst in them (Firestone, 2014; Matthews, 2013). These experiences degraded the will of the clients to seek help. Thus, it will take a useful skill and the proper implementation of a strategy to deal with them.

The therapist aims to help clients feel connected and valued while assisting them in developing the fundamental skills to regulate emotions (Firestone, 2014). The study entitled Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Approach for Suicidal Thinking and Behaviors in Depression by Matthews (2013) emphasized that to engage patients in treating their suicidal thinking and

behaviors, the clinician must convey an empathic approach. It is essential to offer hope by informing the patient that, by working together, solutions or partial solutions to their problem will emerge, thus, providing alternatives from suicide.

It is crucial to delivering help to suicidal clients. Guidance counselors are under threat of creating unstable, dangerous situations that are potentially harmful to clients due to their lack of educational preparation related to suicide intervention (Schmitz et al., 2012). Therapists can prepare themselves for working with such clients by learning to implement the tools and techniques that have been found sufficient to assess and treat suicidal individuals (Firestone, 2014).

Recent research has proven several methodologies to be particularly useful in treating a suicidal client. Some vital elements of these empirically supported treatment approaches are outlined below.

Cognitive therapy for suicidal people was developed by Aaron Beck, Ph.D., and Gregory Brown, Ph.D. Unlike other CBT treatments, this approach is not time-limited. Clients do not graduate from treatment until they demonstrate that they are ready to utilize the therapy (Firestone, 2014). Cognitive therapy's function is to reduce adverse emotional reactions, distressing physiological responses, and self-defeating behaviors by modifying dysfunctional automatic thoughts, initially, followed by changing maladaptive core beliefs. The goals of treatment for the depressed, suicidal patient include: address specific cognitive biases and distortions; develop behavior skills (problem-solving); acceptance and tolerance of emotional pain; improve communication skills (social skills, assertiveness training, conflict resolution skills); reduce environmental stress; and develop supports (Matthews, 2013).

In a study conducted by Samra and Monk (2007) entitled Working with the Client Who is Suicidal: A Tool for Adult Mental Health and Addiction Services, they found that by actively educating clients about mental disorders such as depression, as well as suicide, and by improving clients' ability to recognize and understand their self-limiting and negative beliefs, CBT enables clients to become better regulators of their moods and experiences. It effectively reduces the symptoms of mental illnesses associated with an increased risk of suicide, including depression, anxiety, and psychosis (Mewton& Andrews, 2016). One of those counseling techniques applied, proven by studies, useful in dealing with clients with suicidal tendencies.

It is indeed a great challenge for guidance counselors to deal with clients with suicidal tendencies. It plummets them into a state of anxiety. They dreaded the notion of being a failure whenever they think that their clients will successfully end their lives. It is a burden that makes guidance counselors' hearts heavy and makes their mental state tilted. These points serve as an impetus for this research to embark on its purpose.

Theoretical Lens

This study is viewed from Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (1950) and Beck's Cognitive Distortions Theory (1976).We behave according to what we believe is right. According to Kelly's Personal Construct Theory, people develop personal constructs about how

the world works and then use these constructs to make sense of their observations and experiences. These constructs are used to interpret, predict and anticipate any event, which in turn determines one's behaviors, feelings, and thoughts (Beven, 2014; Cherry, 2018; Raskin, 2017). Thus, whenever guidance counselors deal with clients with suicidal tendencies, it leads them to create a construct that becomes the baseline of the tyranny of what-ifs. For instance, what if they will commit suicide successfully after a counseling session, what if I lead them to get worse, what if I am incapable of handling them, etc. These constructs may avoid such cases since they disturbed guidance counselors' psychological make-up, causing unwanted fears and later influencing their motivation to perform their functions responsibly.

In the same manner, Beck's Cognitive Distortion Theory also explains that people tend to distort one's thoughts because of a bad situation they had experienced or even heard from others. Cognitive distortions refer to the ways that our mind convinces us of something that is not true. These thoughts are deemed inaccurate and used to reinforce negative thinking or emotions, which keep us feeling bad about ourselves (Ackerman, 2017; Good Therapy, 2016; Grohol, 2018; Scott, 2018). Suppose a guidance counselor has this fear of incompetence. In that case, it may result in the misrepresentation of reality, such as his or her fear that he or she is incapable of handling suicidal cases because of a bad experience he or she had along with the counseling session.

The theories above and concepts enlightened the fact that even guidance counselors who are supposed to have a sound mind may become susceptible to emotional wounds such as fears while dealing with clients with suicidal tendencies. Last but not least, these thoughts would help to steer the goal of this research endeavor.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to describe and explore the fears, motivations, and strategies of guidance counselors in handling clients with suicidal tendencies in General Santos City.

Research Questions

1. What are the fears of guidance counselors in handling clients with suicidal tendencies?
2. What motivates guidance counselors to facilitate clients with suicidal tendencies?
3. What strategies do guidance counselors utilize to deal with clients' suicidal tendencies?

METHODS

In this qualitative study, protocols and standards were discussed in this section, which includes different components of the method used.

Research Design

The study used a qualitative phenomenological research design. This design aims to investigate a particular phenomenon directly experienced by a collaborative group (Creswell, 2012). The phenomenon being studied is the experiences of guidance counselors in handling clients with suicidal tendencies.

Participants

We conducted this study in selected schools of General Santos City. We established the following criteria for the selection of the participants: school guidance counselors working in public or private secondary and tertiary educational level, with or still earning license or designated in counseling profession, have experience in handling clients with suicidal tendencies, working for at least one year in the field and willing to actively participate during the conduct of the study.

Sampling

We employed purposive sampling in this study. The use of this sampling technique is about the selection of participants who met the criteria for the phenomenon being studied. The data gathered from them is purposeful (Creswell, 2012). The number of interviews conducted was 9.

Data Sources

Semi-structured Key Informant Interview (KII) was utilized to gather the relevant data needed for this study. It is a data collection tool that intends to ask questions which are validated by professionals among the participants related to the topics on hand. It is the most appropriate tool to be used since the participants represent the people in relation to the phenomenon being scrutinized. In using the KII, four criteria are considered and these are knowledge ability, credibility, impartiality, and willingness to respond (Kumar, 1989; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Data Collection

This study employed several steps as per suggested by Creswell (2012). We searched first the participants who met the criteria discussed above. We wrote a letter of approval to their heads and once approved we wrote a permission letter on the conduct of interview alongside the informed consent. The purpose and significance were stated clearly in the letter and informed consent form in order for the participants to understand the nature of the study. These were done to ensure that we had not violated any protocols in their institutions and to avoid coercion of participation. We used an audio recorder while jotting down notes so that the information was recorded without a miss. Paper trail and backup copies of data were created to ensure proper safekeeping.

Analysis and Interpretation of data

The responses underwent series of steps just like in any qualitative analysis. The three common steps that were employed included data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing, and verification (Creswell, 2012). In analysing the data, the Collaizi's (1978) method was used. Specifically, this study followed the following seven steps: transcripts were carefully read in order to have a general sense of the whole content; significant statements were then extracted and recorded on a separate file noting the pages and line numbers; formulated meanings were derived in each significant statement; clustered themes were sorted out from the meanings; the findings were integrated into exhaustive description under the phenomenon being studied; thematic map was drawn out to describe its fundamental structure; and lastly validation of findings from the informants were sought out.

Trustworthiness

In order to guarantee that this qualitative study was trustworthy, we strictly observed the following components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981).

Credibility. The study made sure that the translations of the data from the responses of the informants were accurate in nature (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). To do this, we established rapport among the informants so that the interview for comfortability in sharing their experiences and perspectives was achieved. The questions that we asked underwent validation from credible persons who were experts in qualitative studies. The data gathered were transcribed,and informants checked the transcription of their answers in order to come up with congruent interpretations.

Transferability. To ensure that the data were generalized, the gathered data were treated and applied to other settings and contexts (Merriam, 1998; Bitsch, 2005). To do this, wetried to draw out the best conclusion from the results given by the informants in order to promote transferability. Such generalization may or may not be applicable to other areas. Thus, detailed information about the context of the study was presented through citing various authors to present the phenomenon in other fields (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability. The reliability of the study was one of the priorities that this study set. Objective information was given through describing the exact methods used in gathering data, analysis of the data and interpretation (Creswell, 2012).

Confirmability. This considers the degree to which other people can confirm the results and associated with the objectivity of the study (Trochim, 2006). We made use of a sound recorder to ensure the data to be gathered coming from the participants and for easy identification.

Ethical Considerations

Warusznski (2002) stated that during the conduct of in-depth interview, various ethical issues may arise such as privacy, honesty, openness, and misinterpretations. I observed the following strictly: anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent to guarantee ethical consideration for the study as per suggested by Richards and Schwartz (2002).

Anonymity. Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants so as to prevent any revelation of identities as recommended by Corti, Day and Backhouse (2000).

Confidentiality. Confidentiality's goal is to protect the participant's identity. It is considered to be in line with anonymity and should be sustained to the highest extent (Tudy & Tudy, 2016).. As per storage of confidential files, all recorded interviews and encoded transcripts were kept and stored in a separate flash drive that no other entities aside from the researchers could have an access. Thus, we observed utmost confidentiality for any information including names, places, and other details that the clients would give.

Informed consent. We asked permission from the participants before I conducted interview sessions. Attached together with the letter of permission was the informed consent wherein participants affixed their signatures as a sign that they agreed to participate in the in-depth interview voluntarily. Furthermore, the consents were explained carefully to the participants and made sure that they understood the whole procedure of the interview session. The objectives of the study were described to the participants so they would know the whole scope and limitations of the study. The questions in the key informant interview were quite sensitive due to its goal which intended to know the first-hand and past experiences of the guidance counselors in handling suicidal clients. That was why the benefits and risks under the consent were discussed with the participants and whenever they felt uncomfortable with the question they were free not to answer it or they might withdraw from the study.

RESULTS

The findings of this study are presented in three clusters based on the three research questions. These include discussions on the (1) fears, (2) motivations, and (3) strategies of guidance counselors in handling clients with suicidal tendencies.

Fears of Guidance Counselors in Handling Suicidal Clients

In this study, three sub-themes were determined as fears of counselors in dealing with suicidal clients. They were apprehensions toward suicidal clients' wellbeing, occupational vulnerability, and adverse effects of dealing with suicidal clients.

Apprehensions toward suicidal clients' wellbeing. Most counselors were afraid that they might lead their client's condition to get worse, aggravate their condition and provoke their suicidal thoughts. These were evident in the succeeding responses of the informants.

Jennie, who has been working as a guidance counselor for a year, expressed her fear in dealing with suicidal clients. She stated:

> *Ang fear ko sir nabakamaliyungmasabikosakanyabaka mas lalo pang lumalala pa yung problem niya.*(Transcript 1, Page 1, Lines 11-12)
> (My fear is that I might say something that can aggravate his condition.)

Meredith, who has been a seasoned guidance counselor, added:

> *I cannot guarantee na whatever we talked about will convince that person because kasidiba it could make or break him.*(Transcript 7, Page 1, Lines 10-11)
> (I cannot guarantee that whatever we talked about will convince my suicidal client. It might make or break him.)

Counselors engaging clients with suicidal tendencies have mutual fears of leading their clients to get worse from their current state. This kind of fear is a prevailing concern among the informants. Furthermore, counselors became vulnerable especially when their suicidal clients expressed their suicidal plans. Rose, a college counselor, described her situation in this way:

> "It worries me so much, what if the student is successful with his plans? I feel that I was not able really to help the student. And it makes me feel, of course guilty, that I didn't exhaust all my effort as a guidance counselor to help the student." (Transcript 4, Page 1, Lines 18-20)

These particular instances lead counselors to fear about their clients' suicidal plans. It becomes a distressing experience among them.

Occupational Vulnerability. Counselors are vulnerable and distressed by the fear of being ineffective in counseling suicidal clients. They experienced the fear of incompetence and rejection during the counseling session. Meredith described her vulnerability, saying:

> *At first, siyempre ang experience ko with them is parang actually I don't know what to do… ine-evaluate koyungsariliko if anoyunggawinko para maconvicenamagchange ang kanyang thoughts on ending his or her life.*(Transcript 7, Page 1, Lines 6-9)
> (At first, my experience with them is I don't know what to do…I try to evaluate myself on what to do to change his/her thoughts about ending his/her life)

The counselors feel incompetent whenever they handle suicidal clients. It leads them to have the impression that they are incapable of providing help among clients' concerns. Heize, who works in a secondary school for almost twenty years, expressed her fears of being ineffective. She said:

> *The fear na am I doing it right? ...Those are fears na parang lang most likely salahat ng experiences ko.*(Transcript 6, Pages 1-2, Lines 20-24)
> (The fear that am I doing it right?...those are the fears I have experienced…)

Concerning their counseling experiences, counselors have a fear of resistance. For example, one participant expressed fear if the client was not receptive to questioning.

> My worries are that…when the clients resist, especially that ah the counselor must question them why like this, like that?" (Jisoo, Transcript 3, Page 1, Lines 18-20).
> (My worries are that…when clients resist especially whenever counselor asks questions)

It is indeed difficult to handle suicidal clients. It might lead counselors to have subtle behavior along with their counseling sessions.

Adverse effects of counseling suicidal clients. Facilitating counseling sessions among suicidal clients may result in professional burnout. Counselors found it draining, fear-provoking, and mentally exhausting. Rose voiced out her experience in dealing with clients and how it affected her.

> Personally it is draining, if the client is at the height of his suicidal thoughts. I feel I am at loss, oh my God, what will I do with this student? My day to day activities are not followed. (Transcript 4, Page 1, Lines 5-7)

Undeniably, counselors find it draining to counsel suicidal clients that interrupts daily activities.Another informant found dealing with suicidal clients as fear-provoking. For example, a participant in the study described how mentally exhausting it is on her part.

> *Meron ka talagang after thoughts for every client namerongganon…We cannot ano assure napagdatingnila kung asasilayung boredom or depression magstrikesakanila any time of the day.*(Meredith, Transcript 7, Page 2, Lines 26-29)
> (You can have after thoughts for every suicidal client…since there is no assurance that whenever they come home their boredom or depression may strike at any time of the day.)

Dealing with suicidal clients is not only a simple job. According to the participants, their worries about them do not end in school. They keep thinking of them even after talking to them. For instance, Jennie shared how her clients could affect her even after work.

> *Sir maisipkotalagahangganghangganggabipauwisabahaynamin, halanaunsakaha to siya, anona kaya nangyarisakanya.* (Transcript 1, Pages 2-3, Lines 46-49)
>
> (Even when I am home in the evening, I still think about my client. I always think of what could have happened to him)

Motivations of Guidance Counselors in Handling Suicidal Clients

Counseling clients with suicidal tendencies is a motivating act among guidance counselors. In this study, two-themes were generated, which include a professional call to help and counseling as an instrument for change.

Professional Call to Help. The participants believed that counseling is not just an ordinary profession. They said it was more about doing service. In the case of those with suicidal tendencies, it is about saving lives. This is explained by one of the participants when she said:

> As what Rose said, "What motivates me is that because I want to save a life so I really want to help that student save his, his life. (Rose, Transcript 4, Page 3, Lines 52-53).

Furthermore, they highlight that it is their role to guide suicidal clients to have successful lives. It is more than just dealing with their present condition when they talk to them but more on how they can help their clients surpass it. One counselor expressed it this way:

> My hope to all my counseling cases is that I am hoping that all of them will become more successful in their uhm endeavors and then I am hoping also that all their issues in life will be resolved. (Jisoo, Transcript 3, Page 5, Lines 90-92)

Based on their responses, counselors are hoping that through counseling, suicidal clients will overcome their personal struggles which would guide them to become successful in their chosen endeavors.

Counseling as Instrument for Change. The participants identified the factors which kept them motivated in counseling their suicidal clients. Aside from the thought of helping them become successful in life, their main intention was for them to look at the positive side in life. Rose, referring to her clients, said:

> These students would be more enlightened that they will no longer plan to take their lives and I really hope that someday they will realize that life is beautiful." (Transcript 4, Page 3, Lines 58-59).

Furthermore, the participants hoped that these students can finish their schooling by first helping them go through their current struggles. Heize stated:

> That they can get over and they could become very successful in life. In spite of the circumstances that they are undergoing at the present time. Someday after they graduate, they move up to Grade 12, they move up to College, they are going to be very successful" (Transcript 6, Page 5, Lines 101-103).

Strategies of Guidance Counselors in Handling Clients with Suicidal Tendencies

Two sub-themes were sourced out from the responses of the informants about their strategies in handling clients with suicidal tendencies. They said that they were relying on counseling tools and techniques and providing a support system.

Relying on Counseling Tools and Techniques. Counseling is not just an act of listening. It involves various interventions which are attuned to the needs of the clients. The participants recognized the importance of counseling tools and techniques. For example, Jennie said:

I let him relax munatapos building rapport with them…hindikosiyadinedretsosa concern taposkamustahin ang studies niya with relationship with his classmates or teachers niya, adjustment with the family… Indirect way naano bang nangyari.(Transcript 1, Page 6, Lines 120-127)

(I let him relax for a while then I build rapport with them…I don't engage directly to his concern then I will ask how's the studies and his relationship with his classmates and teachers…adjustment with the family…indirect manner of asking what was going on.)

To engage suicidal clients discreetly is what the counselors do, so that clients will feel comfortable in discussing their own stories. The participants emphasized how important to use standardized testing materials to better understand clients' present situation. Aiza, who is a high school counselor, suggested:

> *As a school talagamerontayonganomerontayong at least standardized tests namaka ,kasimahirapkasisabihinwalangaetongbatanato may depression.* (Transcript 8, Pages 5-6, Lines 112-116)
> (As a school, there should be at least standardized tests to help the students. It is difficult to say that a particularstudent has depression.)

Several counseling techniques are applied in different areas of concern. Specifically, in dealing with suicidal clients, the participants identified Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) and Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT)asthe ones commonly used. Furthermore, some counselors applied an eclectic approach. It is still the counselor's discretion to use whatever counseling technique they want for as long as it helps their clients to feel better.

Providing Support System. Several instances were indicated on how theyprovided support system among their suicidal clients. They said that they did not only limit to counseling done in school. They found ways to reach out to their clients. For example, Anne, narrated her experience saying:

Kanang I always make to the point na mag follow-up and then call up the attention of the parents, not just you kay you also feel burned-out baya kung ikawlanggud.(Transcript 9, Page 5, Lines 100-104)
(I always make it a point to have a follow-up and then call up the attention of the parents, not just you since you will be burned-out if you are alone in handling them.)

Moreover, the counselors shared that they seek to develop a peer support program that can help suicidal clients to redirect their lives. This is how Rose described it.

> I realized that, in the school, it is really important to really have a support group that can help or some kind of assistance from their peers about their problems. It is something like they are just there to listen. They are there to understand their concerns and problems. So it is really very important to have a support group because through the years there is no program which was initiated. So, for me, right now it is essential to create a support group. (Transcript 4, Page 5, Lines 101-106)

The establishment of this support system can aid counselors to help their suicidal clients in dealing with their struggles in life.

DISCUSSION

Guidance counselors who engaged in counseling clients with suicidal tendencies experienced a range of fears. These are counselors' apprehensions toward suicidal clients' wellbeing, occupational vulnerability, and adverse effects of counseling suicidal clients. We discovered that most counselors have fear concerning their suicidal clients' wellbeing. It encompasses the fear of leading clients to worsen and fear of provoking their clients' suicidal thoughts. Studies found that therapists are afraid that they might mess up and get it wrong, which would lead clients to get worse (Blow, 2017). It is indeed a frightening thought for guidance counselors to perceive that they might aggravate their clients' conditions instead of helping them put their emotions at ease.

Guidance counselors are vulnerable to counseling sessions and may experience self-doubt. This involves the fear of incompetence and rejection. Self-doubt becomes a severe problem among counselors since it holds them back (Nissen-Lie et al., 2017). Although it is part of the first developmental phase of becoming a therapist, this kind of experience still leads counselors to a fear of dealing with clients, especially those with suicidal tendencies. Additionally, guidance counselors are vulnerable during the counseling session. They fear rejection, which leads them to become incongruent with their client during the session (Smith, 2017). They experience this vulnerability and self-doubt because of the fear that their clients will succeed in their suicidal plan, a sense of failure (Rossouw, Smythe & Greener, 2011). It is not only the client's part that should be prioritized. Guidance counselors' feelings must be safeguarded so that the fears such as incompetence will not appear during the counseling process.

Due to the adverse effect of handling clients with suicidal tendencies, guidance counselors are inhibited from following their working schedules. A study identified that school counselors might encounter the suicide of a student during their careers (Fineran, 2012). There are times that handling clients with suicidal tendencies are draining, fear-provoking, and exhausting. They have after-thoughts of their client's condition even when at home. This is because of their fear that their client might commit successfully in ending his or her life. This particular experience creates anxiety among guidance counselors, and one study found that the death of a client due to suicide could lead mental health professionals to have prolonged grief (Darden & Rutter, 2011). Thus, it makes the counselor exert so much effort and give their total focus to their suicidal clients. This experience makes them inattentive to other matters such as themselves, a self-defeating factor.

Despite the fear they are facing, guidance counselors are still motivated to help their clients with suicidal tendencies. Motivations of counselors revolve around them finding relevance in their profession and other factors that drive them to counsel their suicidal clients. Most of them consider their job a helping profession since they aspire to guide their suicidal clients to successful lives. Dealing with suicidal clients is the most stressful part of a counselors' position due to its increasing frequency and significant impact both personally and professionally. However, therapists have a profound responsibility for treating someone in such extraordinary pain (Griffin, 2011). Thus, counselors who have a passion for helping others choose no case for as long as they guide them to the right path is enough evidence of their altruistic behavior.

Also, guidance counselors' motivating factors involve a professional call to help and counseling as an instrument for change. Despite having these negative experiences, counselors and other allied professionals continue to do their job because of an absolute moral obligation to make their clients feel alive (Firestone, 2014). In connection, a particular study entitled Teachers' Perception of the Roles of Guidance Counselors identified that guidance counselors are geared towards providing students their guidance needs, such as resolving students' emotional, educational and personal-social problems (Eremie, 2014). Thus, counselors do their function responsibly since it is their motivation to open their hands among clients seeking their help.

Despite the fears and struggles of the participants, they were able to apply effective strategies. The building of rapport, indirect way of dealing with their primary concern, follow-up sessions, and various programs are cultivated to help put suicidal clients' emotions at ease. Matthews (2013) emphasized that to engage a patient in treating his or her suicidal thinking and behaviors, the clinician must convey an empathic approach. It is essential to offer hope by informing the patient that, by working together, solutions or partial solutions to their problem will emerge, thus, providing alternatives from suicide. The therapist aims to help clients feel connected and valued while assisting them in developing the fundamental skills to regulate emotions (Firestone, 2014). Thus, these essential strategies are the foundation before delving deeply into the client's concern. It helps their suicidal clients to open up their piled-up emotions.

Counseling techniques such as Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy and Cognitive Behavior Therapy are useful to guidance counselors in dealing with suicidal clients. The goals of treatment for the depressed, suicidal patient include: address specific cognitive biases and distortions; develop behavior skills (problem-solving); acceptance and tolerance of emotional pain; improve communication skills (social skills, assertiveness training, conflict resolution skills); reduce environmental stress; and develop supports (Matthews, 2013). It is crucial in delivering help to suicidal clients. Guidance counselors are under threat of creating unstable, dangerous situations that are potentially harmful to clients due to their lack of educational preparation related to suicide intervention (Schmitz et al., 2012). Therapists can prepare themselves for working with such clients by learning to implement the tools and techniques that have been found useful to assess and treat suicidal individuals (Firestone, 2014). Undeniably, the implemented strategies and programs will help guidance counselors achieve their goals and expectations for their suicidal clients.

In general, guidance counselors are still human beings. Emotions such as fears and the factors that motivate them can be part of their growth and development. Thériault, Gazzola& Richardson (2010) revealed that the fears could inspire counselors to study harder, participate in additional training and seek supervision from experienced professionals. Thus, it may improve their motivations to handle clients with suicidal tendencies and devise and implement careful and well-planned treatment plans.

Limitations of the Study

This study focused on the fears, motivations, and strategies among guidance counselors in handling clients with suicidal tendencies. The study results were only limited to the responses provided by the nine (9) informants. It excluded male guidance counselors' experiences in handling suicidal clients who were likewise affected by the same phenomena.

Implications of the Study

Based on the results and discussion of the participants' responses, it can be stated that counselors have unified fears when dealing with clients with suicidal tendencies. It is important to note that the fears they experience might endanger their counseling performance and disturb their personal feelings. It is essential for school administrators and guidance directors not to overlook their counselors' wellbeing aside from helping students with suicidal tendencies. Recreational programs can be implemented so that counselors will have a venue to release their piled up negative feelings whenever conducting a counseling session.

The Philippine Guidance and Counseling Association (PGCA) is encouraged to conduct seminars and workshops on improving the counseling skills of guidance counselors in dealing with suicidal clients. How to protect one's mental state must be added on the topics to be discussed. The learning from the seminar-workshop will be of great help for guidance counselors. This will promote a positive impact on suicidal clients and guide counselors' personal/professional growth and development.

For future researchers, they could conduct studies, particularly the experiences of suicidal clients in counseling. This will serve as a mirror of this study because it solely emphasizes guidance counselors' experiences.

Concluding Remarks

Fears among guidance counselors are somewhat taboo to talk about. Among all professions, they are supposed to have mental fortitude. We should not be blinded about these phenomena happening to them, especially when dealing with suicidal clients. As Kelly's Personal Construct Theory and Beck's Cognitive Distortions Theory emphasized, guidance counselors can be vulnerable to the impact of dealing with clients with suicidal tendencies. The constructs they developed whenever they are handling such cases may distort their mental fortitude, hence predisposing fears and influencing their motivations. This whole situation affects guidance counselors' psychological make-up.

Indeed, handling clients with suicidal tendencies is not easy. Guidance counselors need to exhaust bounteous effort to become the best counselor they can be. The fear that they are experiencing is what makes them humans, after all. It may sound senseless but guidance counselors, just like their suicidal clients, need also guidance to safeguard their psychological wellbeing from the overwhelming emotions they are receiving from conducting and facilitating counseling sessions among their clients with personal issues and struggles. Thus, they are unsung heroes vulnerable to distress.

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