



# Why Teachers Leave: A Phenomenological Inquiry into School Climate and Educator Attrition in Misamis Occidental

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## Abstract

**Background and Aim:** The problem of teacher attrition is one of the burning issues in the Philippines, and Misamis Occidental is no exception, as quite a lot of teachers are leaving their jobs due to poor school environments, overworking, and a lack of administrative assistance. This research was anchored on both the Organizational Climate Theory and Self-Determination Theory and was aimed at establishing the impact of school climate on the motivation and commitment of teachers, as well as the ultimate decision to abandon the teaching career.

**Materials and Methods:** Researchers used a qualitative phenomenological design (Moustakas, 1994) to obtain the lived experiences of eight former teachers who had worked in both public and private institutions in Misamis Occidental. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants, according to their previous teaching experience, and their willful exit from the profession. Information was gathered by comprehensive semi-structured interviews with a depth approach and analyzed following the transcendental phenomenological method by Moustakas, which included epoche, horizontalization, and imaginative variation to establish the essence and the structure of the experiences of the people who participated in the interviews.

**Results:** Thematic analysis demonstrated that there were five themes that were interrelated and helped understand the complex factors leading to teacher attrition. (1) There was a strong mention of personal and professional stressors, and the participants mentioned heavy workloads, burnout, and deterioration of health, which were common causes of emotional depletion. (2) Some of the coping mechanisms were determined as a result of different adaptive responses, including self-reflection, emotional regulation, peer collaboration, and self-care practices. (3) Career satisfaction and fulfillment were tied closely but tend to conflict with each other, where teachers felt the purpose and the success of their work was mainly based on the progress of the students, their freedom in teaching, and their work recognition. (4) Support and administrative leadership were not seen as adequate, and the participants did not feel satisfied with the irregular guidance, lack of recognition, and professional development opportunities. (5) Despite the systemic challenge, professional identity and moral commitment were still apparent since even when some of the participants had chosen to abandon the teaching profession, they still maintained their vocation and moral commitment.

**Conclusion:** The results focus on the fact that psychological and institutional aspects are important contributors to teacher attrition. The retention and professional well-being can be promoted through a positive and supportive school climate that is marked by understanding leadership, fair workload, and acknowledgement of the contribution made by teachers. On the other hand, unfavorable working conditions and poor management service increase turnover. This study highlights the pressing need for responsive school management practices and all-inclusive teacher support systems that foster motivation, enhance professional identity, and maintain a dedicated and robust teaching force.

**Keywords:** School Climate, Teacher Retention, Teacher Attrition, Administrative Support, Burnout, Job Satisfaction





## Introduction

The problem of teacher retention remains a burning issue in Philippine education, and the rates of teacher attrition have been rising in recent years. Unsustainable working conditions, absence of recognition, and administrative support are some of the factors that drive many educators away (Alegado, 2018; Dela Cruz et al., 2025). These issues are more severe in other provinces like Misamis Occidental, where the teaching workforce has become unstable, and the results of student learning have been adversely impacted.

The school climate, which is a set of organizational characteristics that are determined by leadership, collegiality, communication, and resources, has proven to be a critical factor in teacher satisfaction and retention (Vaidya & Hanna, 2023). Positive school climates promote collaboration and belongingness and professional development, whereas negative climates full of workload, unclear policies, and ineffective communication lead to burnout and turnover (Gamboa, 2022).

As is applicable to the Philippine context, turnover has been indicated in the studies to be decreased by effective leadership, open communication, and supportive peer relationships (Ramirez & Capili, 2024). On the other hand, the teachers who feel neglected by the administration, favored, or deprived of autonomy tend to drop out of the profession. Although a few studies have been conducted on the topic of teacher attrition and school climate, there is still a void of qualitative research that provides a lived experience on the part of the teachers and their own view on how these elements contribute to their choice to leave.

This study addresses this gap by using a phenomenological approach to discuss the life stories of Misamis Occidental teachers who have exited the teaching profession. In these stories, the study aims to find out how school climate processes, including leadership support, collegial relationships, and resource allocation, influence the motivation, well-being, and retention of the teachers.

The study is anchored on two theoretical frameworks, including the Organizational Climate Theory (Litwin and Stringer, 1968) and the Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Organizational Climate Theory and the Self-Determination Theory help explain how leadership behavior, patterns of communication, and culture in the organizations influence the motivation and satisfaction of the staff, and respectively focus on the need to meet the psychological needs of teachers, i.e., the need to be autonomous, feel competent, and feel referred to. Combining these two views, the research offers a more robust basis for examining how the climate in schools affects the professional commitment of teachers and their decision to leave or stay in the profession.

## Objectives

The purpose of the study was to research the effect of school climate on the teacher retention of former teachers in Misamis Occidental. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Determine school climate variables that drive teachers to leave the profession;
2. Explain the coping strategies used by teachers to cope with the difficult school environments.
3. Discover how teachers view institutional support and administrative leadership;
4. Know how life and career are influencing the choice to quit; and
5. Suggest mechanisms for how the school climate and teacher retention can be improved.

## Literature review

The problem of teacher turnover is one that has been troubling the sustainability and performance of education across the world. Low pay, inadequate teaching resources, and excessive workloads have also remained problems in the Philippine situation, and they have affected teacher morale and retention (Ingersoll, 2001). School climate, which can be described in terms of the quality of leadership, relationships among colleagues, and the presence of the necessary resources, has been identified as one of the significant factors that affect job satisfaction and retention (Rudasill et al., 2018).

Studies show that supportive leadership is key to retaining school teachers. The presence of trust and belonging is achieved through principals who are mentoring, treating fairly, and offering emotional





support (Boyd et al., 2011). Conversely, bureaucratic administration and the absence of communication lead to frustration and a lack of interest (Alegado, 2018).

The supportive leadership builds trust, but in combination with other climatic factors, including collegial assistance and workload regulation, defines the well-being of teachers. As teachers state that with encouragement and fair treatment, their leaders make workloads more bearable, leadership is found to moderate stress and discourage leaving the profession (Erturk, 2022).

The collegial support is also important in defining job satisfaction. The schools, which promote teamwork, mentoring, and collaboration with peers, have lower turnover rates (Gamboa, 2022). In the same vein, professional autonomy is another factor that adds to the motivation and retention of teachers (Perfecto, 2012; Usma, 2016). In the instances where teachers are left at liberty to factor in creativity and decision-making, they are more morally upright and persistent.

These aspects, which are leadership, collegiality, and autonomy, are mutually dependent elements of a favorable school atmosphere. A supportive principal breeds collegial trust, and this leads to teachers having more freedom and creativity in their teaching. This synthesis is the organizational aspect of school climate as explained by the Organizational Climate Theory (Litwin and Stringer, 1968), where good leadership behavior and open communication reinforce commitment and motivation towards the organization.

Workload and burnout continue to be one of the best predictors of teacher attrition. Emotional exhaustion is caused by excessive administrative workload, a high number of students in classes, and a shortage of teaching materials (Tarraya, 2022; Zuasola & Zalsos, 2024). Lastly, researchers also stress that teacher motivation can be promoted by constant professional growth and good pay (Prudente et al., 2024; Chadwick et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, when teachers have good collegial and administrative support, a heavy workload does not necessarily lead to attrition. Positive leadership and significant teamwork will have a protective effect on the adverse effects of job stressors, which is consistent with the Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985), which argues that when teachers are allowed to realize their psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, intrinsic motivation is maintained despite the challenging conditions.

The combination of these theoretical lenses in the literature indicates that organizational and psychological aspects of school climate influence teacher retention. Leadership and communication organizational factors influence the feeling of competence and belonging in teachers, whereas personal motivation and autonomy influence how the teachers perceive and act on institutional pressures.

Combined, these results imply that a healthy and constructive school atmosphere, which is based on effective leadership, teamwork, and career development, is critical to maintaining a dedicated teaching force.

However, a good deal of the existing literature, even that carried out in the Philippines, has emphasized quantitative or descriptive examinations of attrition. Very limited qualitative studies have been conducted on the lived experience of teachers about school climate and the impact of those experiences on their intentions to stay or leave. This gap highlights the necessity of the current phenomenological research in Misamis Occidental, which aims at giving a contextualized insight into the perception and meaning of the work environment by teachers and the reasons that drive teachers to quit their jobs.

### Conceptual Framework

The current study is based on two theoretical frameworks: the Organizational Climate Theory by Litwin and Stringer (1968) and the Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (1985). According to the Organizational Climate Theory, motivation, performance, and satisfaction of the employees are determined by the environment in which they operate. Leadership behavior, patterns of communication, collegial relationships, and institutional culture are the factors that shape this climate in the school situation. A positive school climate promotes teacher involvement, teamwork, and output, whereas a negative climate can cause burnout, dissatisfaction, and a greater desire to quit the profession.





In addition to this, the Self-Determination Theory describes intrinsic motivation in that when three basic psychological needs are satisfied, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness, people are motivated intrinsically. Teachers flourish when they have professional freedom, confidence in their instructional activities, and significant relationships with administrators and peers in the educational environment.

Combining these points of view, the study presupposes that the psychological needs of teachers are directly influenced by certain aspects of school climate, in particular, leadership practices, collegial collaboration, and open communication. Empowering and supportive leadership promotes a sense of autonomy in teachers by giving them decision-making power and flexibility in teaching. Their competence is supported by constructive feedback and professional development opportunities. Their relatedness is strengthened by positive collegial relationships and a mutual respect culture.

On the contrary, weak administrative leadership, lack of clarity in communication, and the lack of collegial trust (according to the Organizational Climate Theory) lower the autonomy, competence, and relatedness of teachers (according to the Self-Determination Theory). Such a loss of psychological needs contributes to a drop in motivation and job satisfaction and eventually increases the desire to quit the profession.

The support of this pathway has been provided by recent studies in the field of education management (Erturk, 2022; Rudasill et al., 2018; Gamboa, 2022), and it has been demonstrated that effective school leadership and collegial culture serve as mediating variables that protect teachers against burnout and increase their professional commitment.

Therefore, the conceptual model of the present research shows the connection between the elements of school climate (leadership practices, collegial support, and communication climate) with the outcomes of teachers (motivation, well-being, and desire to remain or leave the profession) and is conditioned by the assumptions of Organizational Climate Theory and Self-Determination Theory.



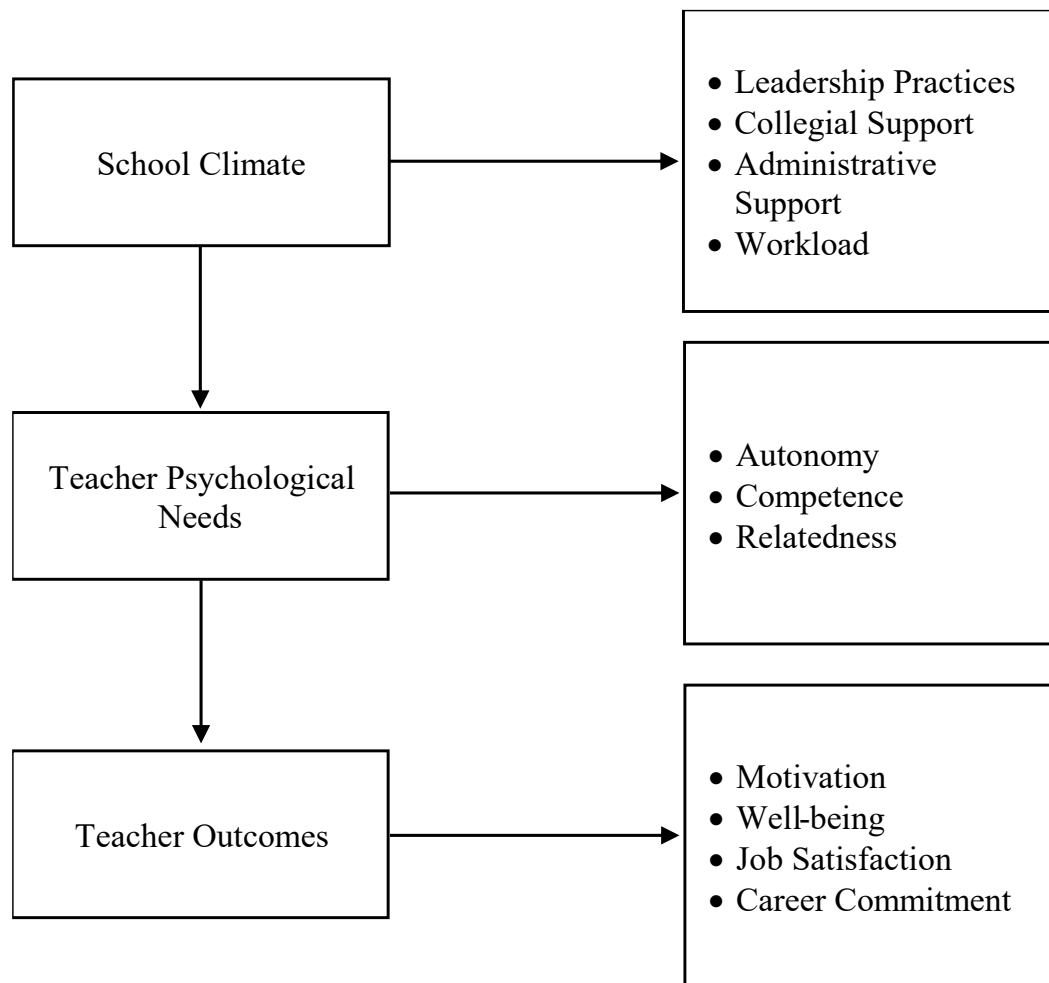


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of the Study

## Methodology

**Research Design.** In this research, the qualitative phenomenological design was used with the framework of Moustakas (1994). The methodology was selected to reflect the lived experiences of those teachers who had left the teaching profession, the essence of their common experiences in terms of the school climate and retention. The design enabled deep and comprehensive information about the human and institutional aspects of teacher attrition.

Even though the study used the principles of phenomenology, it modified the concept of face-to-face interviews to an online qualitative method, given the logistical limitations. Therefore, the research was oriented toward the evocation of reflective written accounts as opposed to oral interviewing. This strategy kept the phenomenological focus on lived meaning and applied the use of digital tools that fit the dispersed nature of the participants.

**Research Environment.** The study was conducted online, which corresponded to the participants' virtual nature. This research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to teacher attrition by examining *Why Teachers Leave: A Phenomenological Inquiry into School Climate and Educator Attrition in Misamis Occidental*.

The online setting provided a chance for teachers in different geographical areas of Misamis Occidental to freely and safely take part in it and maintain confidentiality and accessibility.

**Research Participants.** The participants in this study consisted of 8 former private and public school teachers from Misamis Occidental. They were selected based on the following criteria: (1) having at least one year of teaching experience in private or public schools in Misamis Occidental; and





(2) no longer employed in private or public schools in Misamis Occidental. T01 has 3-5 years of teaching experience in public schools and is currently an Overseas Filipino Worker. T02 has 1-2 years of teaching experience in private schools and is now a virtual assistant. T03 also has 1-2 years of teaching experience in private schools and is a virtual assistant. T04 has 1-2 years of teaching experience in public school and is also working as a virtual assistant. T05 has 3-5 years of teaching experience in public school and is currently working abroad. T06 has 3-5 years of teaching experience in private schools and is now working abroad. T07 has 3-5 years of teaching experience in public school and is currently working as a virtual assistant. T08 has 3-5 years of teaching experience in a private school and is now a business owner.

Purposive sampling made sure that the participants possessed the first-hand experiences of the studied phenomenon, teacher attrition, in terms of school climate.

*Research Instruments.* This qualitative research used an online open-ended questionnaire via Google Forms to gather detailed narrative information regarding teacher experiences within school climate and retention in Misamis Occidental government schools. The instrument contained reflective questions which prompted the respondents to share their perceptions and feelings and insight regarding the topics of leadership support, interpersonal relationships, workload, and reasons.

The online version of the semi-structured interview, as opposed to traditional ones, did not permit probing and follow-up questions. Nevertheless, it allowed the participants to write well-considered, no-rush answers that reflected genuine considerations of their lived experiences. This type of design has enabled richness in qualitative information at the same time as it fits the availability of the participants and their geographic distribution.

The questionnaire started with the demographic questions, followed by the narrative prompts on the leadership, resources, and relationships. The answers were to be given in an open text format, and the Google Form was set so that they could be completed and remain anonymous.

*Data Gathering Procedure.* The researcher practiced a systematic way of qualitative data collection by using the online questionnaire. The researcher applied purposive sampling to sample the participants who were of different educational levels, fields, and school scenarios after securing ethical clearance. The questionnaire link was placed within the professional teacher networks and online contact mediums. All the participants were issued with an electronic consent form outlining the purpose of the study, its confidentiality, and its voluntary nature. The online form was left open within a six-week timeframe, with periodic reminder emails being sent every two weeks. The scholar also kept a reflexive journal where he/she would write about observations and thoughts during the process of data collection. This methodology ensured the phenomenological rigor, though the interviews were not conducted in real time. The results were safely kept in a cloud storage that was encrypted, as the cloud storage was anonymized and data was secured.

*Data Analysis.* This paper has utilized a systematic qualitative analysis methodology that comprised coding, category development, and thematic interpretation. All the participating teachers were given different identifiers (T01, T02, T03, etc.), and the names of the schools were substituted with pseudonyms (e.g., School A, School B). Analysis was initiated by open coding of the responses, which recognized recurrent ideas and patterns. These codes were then selected under larger categories and themes that were compared with the research questions and theoretical frameworks. Even though the traditional phenomenological interviews were not presented, the researcher adhered to Moustakas (1994) epoche, horizontalization, and imaginative variation process to treat written reflections of participants as lived experience statements. The identified themes were contrasted with the existing literature on school climate and teacher attrition to increase the validity. The researcher admits that the absence of probing did not allow probing as is common in phenomenological interviews, but the written accounts yielded much qualitative information as per the aim of the study.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical principles were taken into account in this study, which guaranteed that the rights and protection of all individuals were considered. The study adhered to the standard practices of ethical research and ensured the integrity of the academics in the study.





*Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation.* This study was based on the principles of informed consent and voluntary participation as the basis of its ethics. The objectives of the study, procedures, and their rights were fully informed to all the possible participants before they could consent to take part. They were made very aware of the fact that they were free to join and that they could leave at any given time without any repercussions or decision. The electronic consent was also done via the Google Forms system, where the survey participants were required to explicitly declare their acceptance prior to the survey.

*Data Protection and Confidentiality.* There was a high level of strictness of secrecy in the course of the research. No participant was identified; instead, all the data gathered were anonymized by use of coded numbers instead of names and other personal identifiers. The questionnaire system on the Internet was set up in such a way that the IP addresses or any other possibly identifying metadata were not gathered. All school names or particular places were substituted with generic names in the eventual analysis and presentation. Electronic safeguards involved the use of passwords in securing all research documents, and only the research team had access to the research documents.

*Data Honest Reporting and Integrity.* The study had a high level of data integrity in the research. The responses of all the participants were logged and documented without falsification or cherry-picking. This analysis was conducted in adherence to the original data, and the results were based on verifiable responses of the participants. Quotations quoted in the report have been thoroughly checked against the original submissions to guarantee the proper reflection of the views and experience of the participants.

*Well-being and Rights of the participants.* The research design came with a number of measures to safeguard the welfare of the participants. Delicate issues were addressed with sensitivity, and the participants were informed of the support services in case there were questions that would make them feel uncomfortable. The research team was also aware of the occurrence of power in the researcher-participant relationship and made an effort to reduce the feeling of any pressure to join the research. The participants were allowed to see their answers and ask for their data back until the moment of final analysis.

## Results

This section includes the research results of the study using the written answers of the participants included in the study using an online Google Form. Although these responses are based on actual experience of teachers, the researcher concedes that the richness of the narratives might be less than what would be the case with live interviews, which are usually applied in phenomenological research.

Results are presented in terms of key themes: administrative leadership, workplace conditions, coping strategies, professional development and career growth, and Policy recommendations to retain teachers. These themes are backed by direct quotes of participants, and then they are analyzed by the researcher.

### Teachers' Views on Administrative Leadership in Private and Public Schools

The participants underlined that teacher satisfaction, motivation, and teacher retention are highly dependent on the quality of leadership. Their experiences indicated that effective school leadership leads to collaboration, fairness, and transparency, whereas poor leadership leads to stress and turnover.

*Leadership Support.* The administrators who were appreciated by teachers exhibited understanding, support, and free dialogue. The answers of the participants are presented below:

*"I feel respected and encouraged by supportive and open leaders, hence being more committed to the organization."* – T05

*"I work as a Teacher I at School A, and I see the leadership of the administration as a very important element in my job satisfaction and retention... I will feel valued and determined to remain in the profession when leaders are open and predictable."* – T07.





These statements indicate that emotional support and constant interaction with administrators make teachers feel that they belong and further increase their choice to remain. Poor leadership, on the contrary, breeds alienation and dissatisfaction.

*Transparency in Decision-making.* Trust and accountability: Open communication and involvement in decision making. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*"One aspect that I consider important in terms of my job satisfaction and retention is administrative leadership, where it is found that such leaders are helpful, make decisions fairly, and communicate regularly."* – T02.

*"Administration leadership is an important factor in determining job satisfaction and retention... The correlation between leadership and employee well-being is both effective and direct."* – T03.

These statements suggest that leaders who consult with teachers and exercise transparency would develop trust, accountability, and organizational commitment.

*Fairness in Policies.* The environment of equal and cooperative decision-making guarantees the security and involvement of teachers. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*"As my advice to do my task with balance."* – T04

*"The decision-making should be in the form of teamwork or brainstorming."* – T06.

The concept of fairness and shared governance helped teachers to take ownership of their work and maintain positive morale.

*Impact on Workplace Morale.* Good leadership inspires the workforce and productivity. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*"I assess the influence of administrative leadership to be critical to the achievement and the success of a school... A positive learning environment is promoted by good leadership in administration."* – T01

*"Very important."* – T08

These considerations demonstrate how a successful leader motivates, helps to build the school climate, and enhances teacher motivation and job satisfaction.

### **Challenges Related to Workplace Conditions**

Among the work-related issues that teachers reported as factors that hindered retention, teachers reported high class sizes, low resources, workload, and ineffective administrative support.

*Poor Resources and Overcrowded Classrooms.* These are some of the most urgent problems of educators that affect their capacity to deliver quality education to a considerable extent. The contributing factors to this are high class sizes that make it hard to give individualized attention and bring about a lot of stress and ineffectiveness in teaching. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*"A combination of overcrowded classes and unavailability of resources is one of the most important issues, which can make a teacher resign."* – T06.

*"Classroom overcrowding, shortage of resources, and security all play the largest role in leading to stress, diminished effectiveness, and job dissatisfaction."* – T02.

These remarks represent the impact of poor materials and overcrowded classrooms on stress, the inability to provide students with individual instruction, and the lower quality of instruction.

*Administrative Support and Workload.* Too much work and inadequate administration are also notable causes of teacher turnover. When the teachers are overworked by having to plan lessons, mark, administrative duties, and even extracurricular activities, this causes stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*"Workloads, absence of administrative support, scarcity of resources, and unrealistic expectations are the key problems that make me decide to leave."* – T05.

Participants pointed out that the lack of administrative support and uncontrollable workloads are the main contributors to burnout and decreased morale, which led them to resign in most cases.

*Safety and Student Behavior.* The problem of student behavior, as well as safety issues, is a major concerns that influence the rate of teacher retention and job satisfaction. In cases where teachers are under pressure in the school setting, either by the administration, students, or inadequate disciplinary measures, this might result in stress and burnout, as well as a lack of enthusiasm in teaching. The lack







of institutional support in the discussion of these issues also increases the problem, since teachers themselves are powerless and feel undervalued. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*Teachers may lose their passion and motivation to work in an environment that is not conducive to their safety or due to administrative pressure. – T01*

*“Meanwhile, having a too slow system and having overpowering authority of students towards the teacher.” – T04*

These statements demonstrate that the lack of attention to safety concerns and disciplinary questions that are not addressed by the school administration undermines the confidence and the feeling of professional security among the teachers.

**School Quality Leadership and Location.** Teacher retention and job satisfaction are largely influenced by the location of a school. Schools in remote or hinterland locations experience issues of accessibility, limited resources, and limited opportunities for professional development. The teachers in such regions might experience transport challenges, a lack of teaching resources, and access to training programs, which can impede the quality delivery of education. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*“The fact that the school is situated in a hinterland region well outside the city contributes to the stress and makes it difficult to provide quality education.” – T07.*

*“Poor leadership.” – T08*

Teachers in remote schools were complaining of scarce resources, travel distance, and professional development opportunities, thus leading to stress and low motivation.

#### **Coping Strategies Employed by Teachers**

Nevertheless, educators came up with methods of coping with stress, being motivated, and being committed.

**Stress Management Techniques.** There are many stress management methods that the teacher may employ to address the pressures of the profession, such as mindfulness practice, relaxation, and emotional regulation strategies. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*“I meditate and do mindfulness to deal with stress.” – T01*

*“I normally perform physical exercises such as jogging whenever I am overwhelmed.” – T02*

In these statements, the authors imply that mindfulness and physical exercise are individual methods that teachers employ to maintain focus and balance of emotions.

**Peer Collaboration and Support.** Establishing effective relationships with other employees and implementing collaboration when teaching will enable teachers to cope with the challenges more efficiently. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*“I use my colleagues to support me. By exchanging personal experience and talking about a solution with other teachers, I feel less alone and more confident to cope with the challenges I face in the classroom.” – T05.*

*“Team planning and collaborative teaching will enable me to have a good spread of work and acquire additional insights into instructional practices.” – T07.*

Peer collaboration allowed teachers to get emotional support, problem-solve, and share experiences and ideas about their work, thus alleviating isolation and boosting morale.

**Professional Development and Skill Enhancement.** The constant learning and development of skills enable teachers to meet the changing educational needs and enhance their teaching performance. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*“Workshops and training sessions will enable me to come up with new strategies of teaching.” – T04.*

*“I also establish a line between work and personal life by establishing time to spend with family and hobbies.” – T03.*

These statements demonstrate that continuous learning opportunities, together with the balance between work and personal life, empower the motivation and well-being of teachers.





## Role of Professional Development and Career Growth on Teachers' Decisions to Remain in Philippine Private or Public Schools

The reflections of the teacher participants regarding the Role of Professional Development and Career Growth that would most likely affect the decision of teachers in staying in Philippine Private or Public Schools include: Access to Professional Development and Career Growth Opportunities, Salary Incentives Tied to Professional Growth, Consequences of Limited Training and Growth Opportunities, and Intrinsic Passion of Teaching and Growth.

*Access to Professional Development and Career Growth Opportunities.* These are the many training programs, mentorship programs, and career development opportunities that assist teachers in building their skills, enhancing their teaching techniques, and advancing their careers. The schools that provide continuous professional development promote the motivation of teachers, increase job satisfaction, and retention rates. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*"Professional development and career growth are very important when teachers decide to stay in the Philippine public schools. The constant training and advancement offered to teachers increase their morale, improve their teaching capacity, and give them a sense of professional satisfaction. Yet, when such opportunities are not provided, feelings of stagnation and frustration tend to come up. In the absence of any career advancement, any teacher might feel undermined or just stuck in his or her profession, which could result in burnout and the urge to quit the job."* - T01.

*"Professional development and explicit career growth opportunities allow teachers to remain, and their lack causes frustration and increased turnover in Philippine public schools."* - T02.  
*Career advancement and professional growth play a critical role in helping teachers decide to remain in the Philippine school. When the opportunity to develop skills, grow professionally, and gain recognition is zero, the teachers will feel appreciated and will be motivated, hence increasing the retention rates. Investing in the development of teachers is not only beneficial to their careers but also contributes to the improvement of the quality of the offered education."* - T03.

*Career growth and professional development are critical factors in the choices that teachers make in staying in a Philippine public school. Teachers feel empowered, motivated, and valued when they have opportunities available and accessible to training, promotion, and growth and enhancement of skills."* - T07.

*"It assists the teacher in being motivated to work."* - T08

According to the participants, training, promotion, and mentorship opportunities helped in motivating them, but the absence of growth opportunities resulted in frustration and attrition.

*Salary Incentives Tied to Professional Growth.* These reactions are a recognition of the fact that career-based financial support is a significant factor in retaining teachers. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*Teachers would be kept in the profession by the salary incentives being pegged to the professional development opportunities. Educators develop more motivation to work when schools offer financial incentives and career advancement programs."* - T04.

Salary incentives and recognition made the respondents feel that they were valued as professionals, which raised their job satisfaction.

*Consequences of Limited Training and Growth Opportunities.* The subject highlighted the adverse aspects of the lack of provision of professional development opportunities, resulting in frustration and stagnation. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*"Without any significant training, mentorship, and progress, many end up frustrated, stagnated, and in the long run leave."* - T05

This means that lack of training and mentorship is a factor that leads to burnout and disengagement.

*Intrinsic Passion for Teaching and Growth.* This links professional development to the ardent desire of teachers to teach the young minds, and this makes them dedicated in the long term. The answers of the participants are presented below.





*"The absence of significant training, mentorship, and career growth tends to cause frustration, stagnation, and eventual departure." - T06.*

The teacher's passion towards teaching did not reduce, yet with time, they began to lose this intrinsic drive unless they are supported by the institutions.

### **Recommendations on Policy or School-Based Interventions to Improve Teacher Retention**

The retention of teachers is a major problem in the educational sector, and different interventions at the school level can be used to curb the problem. According to the responses of the participants, some of the important strategies are mentorship programs, better access to resources, and wellness initiatives. The interventions will take place with the aim of providing a conducive environment, decreasing burnout, and increasing the motivation of teachers to stay in the profession.

*Mentorship Programs.* These guides give emotional support and develop both new and experienced teachers. Such programs assist teachers to overcome the challenges, experience less sense of isolation, and feel like a member of the school community. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*"As per my experiences, there are several interventions that can be important in enhancing teacher retention. First, the mentorship programs of both new and experienced instructors may offer some important guidance, emotional support, and professional development that will help alleviate the feelings of isolation and frustration. The availability of better teaching materials, current technology, and smaller classes would ease the burden on the teachers striving to address the needs of diverse students with little assistance. Also, preventive burnout programs, such as mental health resources, stress management programs, and proper work-life balance policies, are mandatory. Clear career growth and advancement opportunities, as well as recognition of the achievements, would also make teachers feel that their contribution to the profession is appreciated and that they are encouraged to continue with the work." - T01.*

*"My experiences may support teacher retention most effectively with the help of mentorship programs, enhanced access to resources, and wellness-intensive programs." - T02.*

*"In my experience, the best interventions would be the mentorship of the new teachers, increased access to teaching tools, decreased administrative tasks, and mental health and wellness initiatives. Such attempts would help to make the environment friendlier and lessen burnout and encourage teachers to remain in the profession longer." - T05*

These statements point out that formal mentorship and emotional assistance lessen the isolation of instructors, enhance self-confidence, and enhance long-term retention.

*Improved Access to Resources.* Availing teachers of more teaching resources, modern technology, and reduced class sizes relieves the stress of supporting the needs of diverse students with limited resources. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*"Other than mentorship programs, there should be some form of improvement in resources and wellness programs there, Opportunities for Professional Development, providing training programs, scholarships, and career advancement paths, encourage teachers to stick to the profession by making them realize that they will grow." - T03.*

*"In my case, better resources and wellness programs. Concerning the well-being of the teachers, particularly where there is a large amount of paperwork." - T06*

It was emphasized by teachers that the working conditions and morale can be boosted only by means of sufficient materials and equipment to use in classes, smaller classes, and modern facilities.

*Wellness Initiatives.* The work-life balance policies and mental health resources, as well as stress management programs, can assist in the prevention of work-related burnout and enhance overall well-being among teachers. The answers of the participants are presented below.

*"According to my experiences, interventions in schools like effective mentorship programs to both new and struggling teachers, better access to instructional resources, wellness programs to support mental health, and work-life balance would be most effective to increase teacher retention. Such programs provide a favorable atmosphere, decrease burnout, and make teachers feel better prepared in their work." - T07.*



*“The people surround to motivate to work and to achieve the goal he/she prefers to himself/herself.” - T04.*

These contemplations point out that wellness, stress management, and balanced workloads of teachers are critical measures towards maintaining teacher motivation and retention.

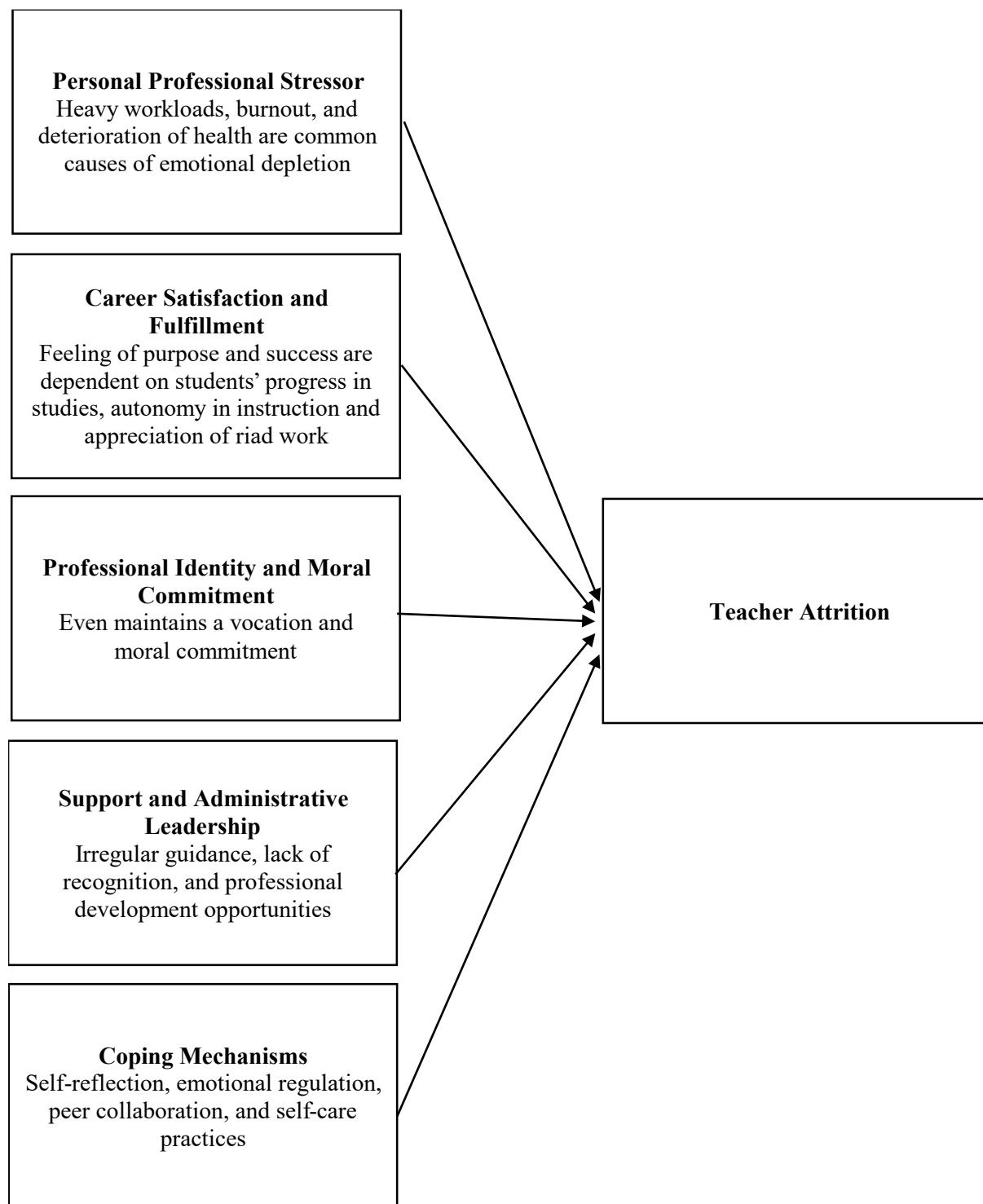


Figure 2. Teacher Attrition



## Discussion

The study revealed that the lack of teachers in the Misamis Occidental province is an intricate issue that would be influenced by institutional and psychological requirements. The findings are based on the Organizational Climate Theory (Litwin and Stringer, 1968) and the Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985), and it was revealed that leadership behavior, workplace support, and professional development have an impact on the sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness among the teachers.

### **Administrative and Leadership Support**

The findings demonstrate that participatory and effective leadership promotes collaboration, transparency, and trust, which are major elements of positive school climate. This is in tandem with the results of Anog, de Vera, and Peteros (2024), who concluded that working conditions, administrative support, and professional development had a strong effect on retention of teachers in private schools in the Philippines. On the other hand, autocratic leadership inhibits the autonomy of teachers, whose autonomy, according to Self-Determination Theory, results in low intrinsic motivation.

### **Workplace Conditions and Institutional Climate**

The information showed that overcrowded classes, lack of resources, and too much work have negative impacts on teacher morale. The results are similar to a study by Gallego (2023) in Davao City that reveals a significant negative relationship between school climate and teacher burnout among mathematics teachers. These poor conditions are indicators of poor institutional structure according to Organizational Climate Theory; on the other hand, by means of Self-Determination Theory, they pose a threat to the competence and autonomy of the teachers.

### **Occupational Hazards, Environmental and Safety Stressors.**

The perceived safety and student behavior are other issues that compromise the sense of relatedness and trust between teachers and their workplace. Godoy and Garcia Jr. (2023) conducted a study in a rural school in the Philippines and discovered that collegial leadership and teacher-teacher relationships were determinants that created a favorable school climate at the district level. Lack of discipline and safety measures in the institution weakens relatedness and leads to attrition.

### **Adaptive Resilience and Coping Mechanisms**

Despite the pressures of the system, teachers worked out adaptive mechanisms with the help of mindfulness, peer collaboration, and time management. These coping behaviors are indicative of intrinsic self-regulation in line with Self-Determination Theory, where autonomy and relatedness underlie resilience. Even though qualitative research on this topic is scarce in the Philippines, one phenomenological inquiry by Salipot and Quintana (2024) of those teachers who left concluded their decision to remain or quit, found that the themes of professional identity, peer support, and psychological well-being mediated their choice.

### **Career Development and Goals**

The development of the profession has become a determining factor in retention. Teachers get the feeling of competence and appreciation when they have access to training, promotion, and recognition, and frustration and stagnation come with insufficient access. In the context research study on Pampanga in a private-school setting, the article titled, Exploring Key Factors to Teacher Retention in Philippine Schools: The role of job satisfaction, workload, and professional development (2025) found that job satisfaction, workload, and professional development were strongly associated with teacher retention. These results validate the fact that development opportunities meet competence needs based on Self-Determination Theory.

### **School-Based Interventions and Policy Implications**

The interventions recommended by the participants, i.e., mentorship programmes, increased resources, and wellness programs, are consistent with both theories. In terms of the Organizational Climate Theory, these interventions enhance institutional support; in the Self-Determination Theory, they enhance autonomy (vice and choice), competence (growth), and relatedness (supportive







relationships). Policymakers and school leaders must therefore use holistic retention strategies, which are based on climate theory and motivational theory.

### Theoretical and Cultural Integration

This study builds upon the two studies by putting them into a Philippine educational context, where other values like *bayanihan* and *pakikipagkapwa* reinforce collegial relationships and moral dedication. Such cultural beliefs are these cultural values are a manifestation of the dimension of relatedness in the Self-Determination Theory, meaning that the motivation of Filipino teachers is based not only on agency but also on solidarity.

### Limitations of the Study

Although the research can offer valuable information on the topic of teacher attrition, it is limited by methodological constraints. The richness of the phenomenological data was compromised by the use of an online questionnaire (through Google Forms) as opposed to semi-structured interviews that were conducted in-depth. The impossibility of pursuing the follow-up of responses limited the emotional richness and context. Future research must also utilize face-to-face interviews or semi-structured interviews to enable an in-depth lived experience and enhance phenomenological validity.

### New Knowledge from the Research

This study is an important addition to the body of current research on teacher retention in the Philippines, as it provides localized and phenomenological explanations of factors and reasons behind teacher turnover in Misamis Occidental. The research contributes to the body of knowledge in four related aspects, such as contextual insight, theoretical advancement, implications for policy and practice, and empirical relevance.

1. *Contextual Insight.* The analysis frames teacher attrition in the lived subjectivities of the Filipino teachers by describing the cultural, social, and institutional realities of the provincial schools. The results fill the gap between the concepts of organizational climate developed globally and the localized practices of the Philippine education system. They demonstrate the interplay between contextual aspects, including administrative support, workload, and school culture, and the personal well-being and professional identity of teachers.

2. *Theoretical Advancement.* The Organizational Climate Theory (Litwin and Stringer, 1968), coupled with Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985), gives a dual approach to the issue of teacher retention: the organizational and psychological understanding of the issue. This paper goes one step further in demonstrating that not only the institutional conditions but also the mediators of culture that are already present in the findings, i.e., *bayanihan* (collective support) and *pakikipagkapwa* (interpersonal connectedness), influence teacher resilience in the Philippine context. These Filipino values contribute to the sense of relatedness and moral purpose among teachers to supplement the psychological needs presented in the Self-Determination Theory.

3. *Implications of Policy and Practice.* The results underscore the fact that to be able to retain teachers effectively, teacher-retention policies should target humanization of schools, i.e., development of environments that promote empathy, independence, and ability. Involving governance, equitable workload allocation, and reward systems to enhance intrinsic motivation should be encouraged in the leadership-training programs. Well-being and collegial trust should be promoted as the key aspects of school improvement by policymakers and administrators in line with the existing body of literature that puts an emphasis on supportive leadership and inclusive school climates (Anog et al., 2024; Gallego, 2023; Godoy & Garcia Jr., 2023).

4. *Empirical Relevance.* This study focuses on the stories of teachers, unlike other previous studies, where the majority of the studies were based on quantitative surveys, which overlook the emotional, moral, and cultural aspects of retention that cannot be quantified through numerical analysis. It adds value to the qualitative study on the well-being of the teachers in the Philippines as it shows that the retention is not as much based on the financial incentive as it is on the care of relation, and



organization. The school climate based on empathy, trust, and professional respect is a positive element that keeps the teachers involved as well as enhances the ethics of the teaching profession itself.

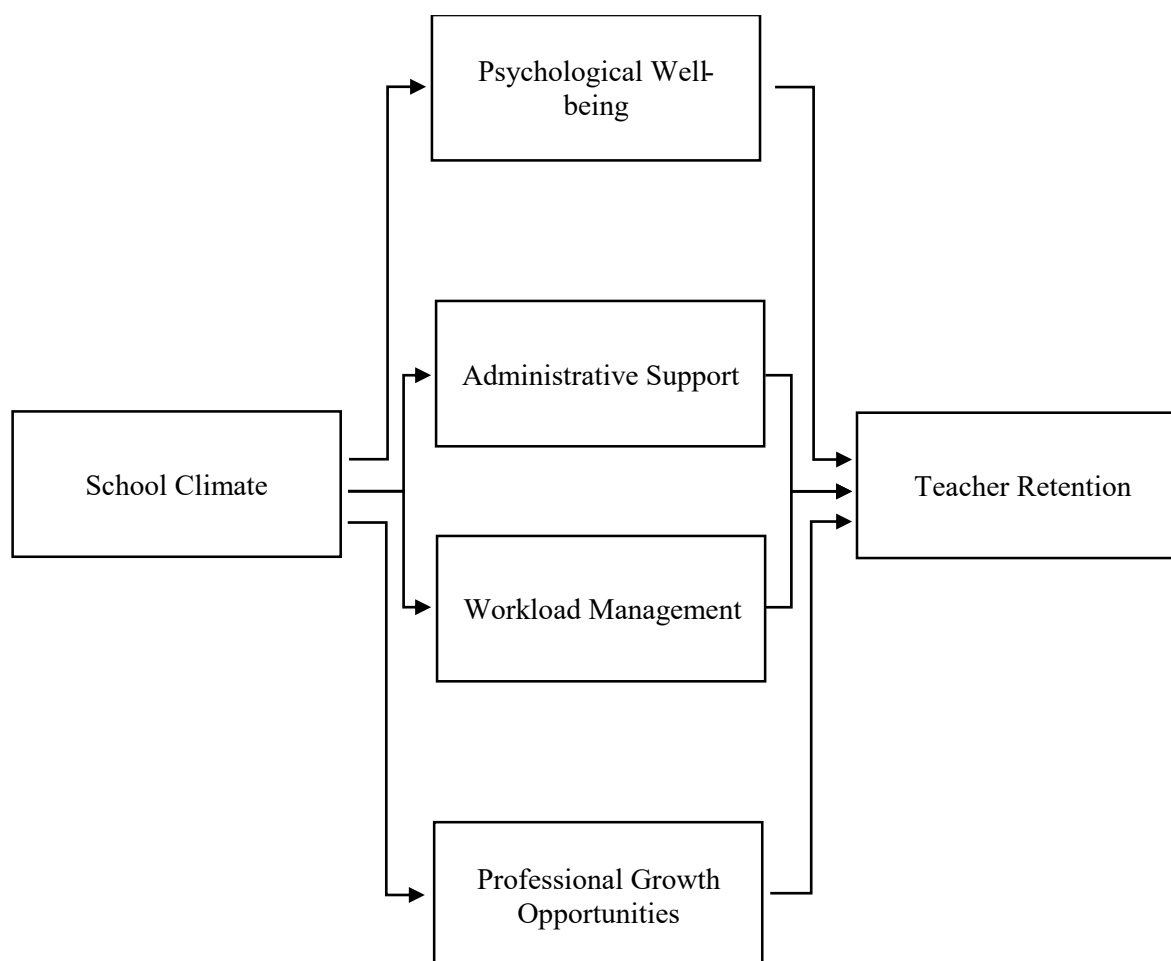


Figure 3. School Climate and Teacher Retention

## Recommendations

In accordance with the findings and conclusions of the conducted study, the following recommendations can be made. These recommendations have been provided based on the study's limitations, particularly its reliance on online qualitative responses, which should be viewed as points to inform future policy and school programs rather than as definitive prescriptions.

### 1. Establish culturally grounded mentorship programs

Schools ought to come up with organized mentoring processes for both new and experienced teachers that should involve the Filipino spirit of bayanihan as a form of collective support and cooperation. These programs have the potential to offer emotional support, professional counseling, and a form of community to minimize the levels of teacher isolation and turnover.

### 2. Ensure sufficient classroom resources and technological assistance

The administrators must focus on adequate teaching resources, workable facilities, and the availability of digital resources. In the area of Misamis Occidental, where the disparity of available resources is a common occurrence, collaborations with local government bodies and private industries can be used to address the inequity and raise the quality of instruction.

### 3. Promote equitable workload distribution



The school leaders need to provide a balanced approach in teaching, administration, and extra-curricular activities. Team teaching, scheduling of tasks based on sharing, and periodical workload audit are some of the strategies that would help avoid burnout and keep teachers motivated.

*4. Adopt healthy and psychological programs*

Counseling services, mental health programs, and stress management workshops should be incorporated into the annual plans of the schools. Work-life balance can be promoted by offering flexible schedules and well-being days that could enable teachers to overcome emotional burnout and raise job satisfaction.

*5. Offer ongoing professional training*

Schools, together with the Department of Education and the institutions of higher learning, ought to provide continuous training, workshops, and scholarship opportunities. Such efforts can be used to increase the competence of teachers, stimulate their lifelong learning, and increase their professional development.

*6. Enhance remuneration and advancement procedures*

The education leaders and policymakers need to reconsider pay scales and come up with clear career development systems. Offering performance-based rewards based on teacher development will be able to attract and retain qualified teachers in both urban and rural schools.

*7. Embrace participatory and understanding leadership styles*

School administrators ought to foster inclusive decision-making, open communication, and transparency in policies. Compassionate leadership creates trust, independence, and belonging, which are the psychological needs to retain the teachers.

*8. Promote safety, infrastructure, and access in the remote locations*

In geographically remote and hinterland schools, the administrators are expected to deal with safety concerns, provide better facilities, and get transportation assistance for teachers. These initiatives make the working conditions more favorable and stable, allowing teachers to remain.

*9. Facilitate teamwork in society*

It is recommended that school leaders institutionalize the community-based support programs in the form of bayanihan, where parents, teachers, and the local stakeholders are jointly responsible for maintaining morale and enhancing the conditions within a school. This group activity has the potential to reinforce social ties and minimize professional loneliness.

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