

MICROPOLITICS IN THE WORKPLACE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES, AND INSIGHTS

ABSTRACT

This paper explored the experiences teachers who have witnessed or experienced firsthand the manifestation of micropolitics in the workplace. This employed a phenomenological approach, and utilized in-depth interview to gather data on challenges, coping and insights of teachers, and results were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings of the study revealed that micropolitics in the workplace is prevalent. There were four themes that emerged in the live experiences of the teachers namely: *no freedom in the workplace; exploitation of newly-appointed teachers; favoritism in the workplace, and; affect motivation for promotion*. On the other hand, results also indicated that teachers continue to thrive on working on themselves and overcoming their challenges through *acceptance, self-trust and development*. Meanwhile, the prevalence of micropolitical actions in the workplace of teachers creates *unhealthy environment and cause bias* in the workplace that may cause rise among peers. Nonetheless, the results have implications to the current system of DepEd and the local offices that handle the division, thus, appropriate interventions must be done to help teachers and secure better-quality education for students.

Keywords: *Graduate Tracer Study, San Pedro College Graduate School, Survey Research Design, Personal and Professional Growth, SPC Core Values*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the advent of the 21st century, micro-politics in the workplace of secondary school teachers have garnered attention. It is characterized by how individuals and groups within organizations use formal and informal power to attain their goals within the organization (Al-Ani, 2016). Recent critical analysis of workplace innovation studies by secondary school teachers has demonstrated the importance of the power and political structures influencing organizational innovation and learning structures (Koski, Pasi & Jarvemsivu, 2015).

Micro-politics is demonstrated by how people seek to use power to control others, defend themselves and fight for what they want (Kairine,2018), this blurs the traditional distinction between teaching and leadership—questions the professionalism of school leaders in the process (Trupe,2016). Lochmiller (2018) defined school micro-politics as "the formal and informal use of the principal and teachers of legitimate and illegitimate power to further individual or group goals". In this regard, results from a study by Lindqvist et. al. (2019) and colleagues indicate that new teachers encountered both interpersonal and intrapersonal tensions as they began their careers in teaching, owing to the micropolitical essence of their profession and the school they work in. Later, it was discovered that different methods such as partnership, conformity, manipulating, and autonomy was used (Lindqvist et. al., 2019; Kelchtermans,2015).

In the Philippines, in an investigation led by Tolentino (2015), it was uncovered that the positioning and rating framework in the activity situation hiring teachers are not followed. Some are made to pay large amount of money to the DepEd officials, school heads or donate home appliances for the processing of appointment papers, promotions, and hiring processes. In relation to this, there is also evidence that the quality of teachers is also inequitably distributed in schools, and this is alarming because, in the study of Lee (2018), students taught by less efficient

teachers appear to have a negative relationship with the short- and long-term educational achievement in their academic journey.

Locally, David (2017) stated that there exists the 'select', privileged student system exists in Davao City schools, with resources and opportunities almost entirely ignored by the rest of the student body: more and better materials, new and better furnished classrooms, more qualified teachers, more opportunities for participation. Unfortunately, with regards to additional literatures discussing micro-politics in the perspectives of teachers and schools, there remains a lack of studies in the local setting, studies on micro-politics in the public schools, and the experiences of teachers on this phenomenon.

In response to this, the research hopes to address the dearth in the literature regarding micro-politics in the Department of Education in the local context. To add, the researcher sees the urgency to conduct this study to identify and understand the experiences of Secondary School Teachers and their possible implications in the quality education they provide and the academic journey of their students. The results of this study can be used as a reference to mediate any form of the appositive effect of this phenomenon through investigating the meaning of how these lived experiences shape the teachers' perception, motivation, and performance in their respective workplaces. Thus, it is the researcher's expectation that this study will be able to contribute to processes in the current educational system in the country and improve the quality of human resource management and most importantly to improve the quality of education provided in public schools and to better the service to the community as well.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed the qualitative research design utilizing the phenomenological method. Silverman (2010) emphasized that a qualitative study provides a distinct and more sufficient understanding and elaborative comprehension of people's experiences which can contribute to the development of the topic. Additionally, the purpose of using the phenomenological approach was to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they were perceived by the actors in a situation. In the human sphere, this normally translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions, and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participants (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher saw this to be appropriate in investigating the experience of teachers that experience micro-politics. This entailed that even with the collective need to understand the lived experiences of teachers their individual feelings in their experience of micro-politics in the workplace was considered as a tool and was not neglected in the conduct of this study.

Research Participants

Using purposive sampling, fifteen (15) Public Secondary School teachers in five (5) Schools in the Division of Davao Occidental particularly in the municipalities of Don Marcelino, Sta. Maria, Malita, Jose Abad Santos and Sarangani, were chosen to participate in the data gathering process. Specifically, among the 15 fifteen invited participants- five (5) for the focus group discussion and ten (10) for the in-depth interview to validate the findings. Included in the study: least five (5) years of working experience in the mentioned institutions and was able to identify the manifestation of micro-politics in workplace. They were Masters of Education and were teaching at Public Secondary Schools in the Division of Davao Occidental particularly in the municipalities of Don Marcelino, Sta. Maria, Malita, Jose Abad Santos and Sarangani, regardless of age and gender, willing participants were considered as well as long as they suit the abovementioned inclusion criterion. The participants were also referred and pre-interviewed to ensure the authenticity of their narratives and experiences regarding micro-politics. They have evidence that they have been denied and excluded from opportunities to develop their skills and competencies.

Meanwhile, excluded are those who had less than 3 years of experience. Unable to vouch the manifestation of micro-politics in workplace and does not work in the abovementioned institutions. Interested participants was not catered. On the other hand, participants were to decide to refuse to answer the questionnaire, they will be reminded of the consent form and their voluntary participation that would obligate them to participate in action as needed in the form. Meanwhile, withdrawal of their participation was only accepted if the researcher vouches psychological, physical and emotional harm was inflicted to the participants as the interview progresses.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the gathered data, the researcher followed Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenology data analysis model as well as the current data analytical procedures of Saldaña (2013) which highlights conceptual patterns and described the processes which were followed in the study.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with a strong adherence to the ethical protocols and guidelines set forth by the University of Mindanao Ethics committee. The researcher religiously requested and secured from key school officials corresponding permission necessary to complete this research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Lived experiences of Teachers on Micropolitics in their Workplace

After the analysis of the shared responses of the participants of the study, Table 1 shows the themes that answered the question on the lived experiences of the secondary school teachers on the micro-politics in their workplace. Thus, there are four themes emerged namely; *No freedom in the workplace*; *Taking advantage of the newly-appointed teachers*; *Existence of favoritism in the workplace*; *Motivation for promotion is affected*.

Further, micropolitics is characterized by tactics of strategies used by individuals to allow them to resolve a problem in their favor. In organizational theory, it includes all means to gain, create and use the power within an organization to achieve a person's goals on how they desire it (Kelchermans, 2017).

Table 1. Lived experiences of micro-political challenges faced by Secondary School teachers

| THEMES | CORE IDEAS |
|---|--|
| No freedom in the workplace | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachers feel that the school heads control the actions of the teachers. • Teachers experience feelings of being controlled which is a challenge. • The teachers feel that they are indebted that they are fearful of disobeying their school heads. |
| Exploitation of newly-appointed teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro-politics in the workplace usually take advantage of newly-hired employees/appointees over the old employees. |
| Favoritism in the workplace | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachers believed that micro-political challenges faced include not being prioritized to represent the school. • The teachers see favoritism as a manifestation |

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| | <p>of micro-politics in the workplace and it blinds school heads from seeing the potential of other teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachers see that some are unable to be chosen because micro-politics in the workplace favor some teachers over others, which affects their potential for future promotions. • The school heads are unable to recognize the abilities of others because they prioritize some teachers over others. • The teacher said a manifestation of micro-politics when principals favor old employees than novices. |
| Motivation for promotion is affected | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro-politics in the workplace affects the confidence of other teachers who submit for promotions, just because of the lack of internal connections. |

No freedom in the workplace

The participants of this study are unable to do their tasks properly as they feel that their actions are restricted. Because of cases of micropolitics, teachers oftentimes feel that they cannot do tasks, disobey or go against the instructions of their school heads, regardless if it is not relevant to their job description. During in-depth interviews, stated that micropolitics in the workplace cause teachers to be entitled to follow their school heads, which consequently leads to losing their freedom at work. Participant 2 said:

The challenges diha is mahadlok ka musuway or manlaban it's because of the word "utang na loob". Na if manlaban ka or musuway ka nahulog kay wala kay ikabalos atong nautangan nimo ug loob. Maong ang gibuhay nako edi magsunod-sunod ra jud sa unsay mando nila. [RQ1_P2_IDI2

(The challenges there are afraid to disobey or fight it's because of the word "utang na loob". That is, you try to fight for it, it turns to something that has nothing to repay for that particular person. That is why I am just following what they order.)

Similarly, during the focus group discussion, participant 5 also said that secondary school teachers often have experiences with forces that control their behavior. Participant 5 stated:

Base sa akong naexperience challenges faced by secondary school educators is the kanang forces within then school because you are controlled by your head. RQ1_P5_FGD1

(Based on the challenges that are faced by secondary school educators are the forces within the school because you are controlled by your head (school).)

In the statement, it is apparent that participants recognized that school heads impose to their teachers that they must follow. This is a challenge to the efficacy of teachers as their actions are restricted in the process. The same participant added:

Kanang dili kaayo ka kalihok ba kay murag jud kontrolado. RQ1_P5_FGD1

(I mean you cannot freely move, because you seem to be controlled.)

Secondary school instructors believe they owe their school heads a favor since they have done them a favor in the past, and they are afraid of offending them at any moment throughout their

service at their school, according to the findings. Actions that indicate you are seeking to argue with or contradict your school leaders indicate that you are unable to respect them. They are left to do whatever they desire, regardless of their school's aims. Teachers are reminded that by doing so, they will be able to show their appreciation for the vital assistance provided by their school principals.

Exploitation of newly-appointed teachers

Novice teachers, although in a short amount of time they have started working, they noticed how micropolitics manifested in their workplace. Going back to when they were newly hired, principals oftentimes give them tasks that would require them to serve far-flung areas. Where supposedly, experienced and veteran teachers ought to fulfill. Furthermore, due to close ties, teachers assigned to the task avoided the difficulty and complication of the work. Instead, newly hired teachers received and completed the work as they had no option but follow orders.

During the focus group discussion, participant 7 reminisced their experiences when they were still a novice teacher in their workplace, they said:

Ako ma'am as newly appointee atung mga panahona kanang naa mi assignment ba nga musaka sa bukid tapos among principal dool sa dughan man tung mga daan nga taas-taas na serbisyo sa eskwelahan so nag sipsip sa amoang principal kay dili siya muadto kay kapoy lagi saka sa bukid unya lapok. Tapos kay ako man ang bag o ako ang gitudlo nga musaka didto. RQ1_P7_FGD1

(Me, ma'am as a new appointee that time we have this assignment wherein we need to climb the mountain to pay a visit however those who are close to the principal approached him and since they are close, they could leech over just because it was tiring and muddy. Then for me, since I was still new and had no experience with the place was assigned to go and I needed a guide.)

Similarly, participant 5 added:

... sa workplace kanang naay mga ipabuhay ang una pakuanon ana, i-assign ana, i-assign sa mga task is isa sa mga maassign ana kato jud mga tang an na. kato jud mga taas taas na naa nay alam. Ikaw newly appointee or ako naniid pa sa panahon pero naa puy experience nga kanang ang ginapaboran jud usahay sa principal is kato jud kanang mga iyang nakauban na taod taod kaysa kami nga newly appointee, mao lang akong naexperience. RQ1_P5_FGD1

(For example, in the workplace in assigning a task it will be them that will be assigned since they already have the experience. It is evident that the Principal favoured the old employees, that was my experience)

In reflecting on their experience, it is clear that beginner teachers are frequently targeted by micropolitical activities in the workplace, as evidenced by their comment.

Favoritism in the Workplace

The participants of the study also recognized their experience of favoritism as one of the manifestations of micropolitics in the workplace. For those who explicitly display favoritism to other employees or teachers, those who are disadvantaged in the process find it favorable.

For teachers, favoritism is a strain because their actions must intend to not offend their school head and not lose their favors. During the in-depth interview, Participant 1 posited:

Para sa akoo makaapekto jud siya sa akoo kumbaga malain pud ang akong buot ba kay tungod kanang magpakita ko ug abilidad pero murag dili man makita kay lagi mass naay priority kaysa sa akoo). RQ1_P1_IDI1

(It affects (position) as an educator I feel offended because If I show some skills it would seem that they cannot see it because there are other priorities before me.)

Similarly, during the focus group discussion, Participant 7 shared:

Pero para sa akua kuan medyo unfair siya, uhm especially kung visible kaayo ang micro-politics sa area kay daghan jud kaayo kung ibtang nato mga favoritism gani datingan so mas lamang jud to kung daghan ka kapit na. RQ1_P7_FGD1

(For me is kind of unfair, uhm especially when the micro-politics are visible in the area where there is a lot of favoritism.)

The statement of the participants indicated a sense of putting micropolitics as an advantage for those who make use of their connections and friends from higher positions to make their work easier than their peers. Similarly, the act of favoritism was also recognized by another participant:

Ang experience nako kay naglisod ko okay murag naay favoritism ba kanang moment nga gusto unta ka mubuhay sa usa ka butang pero maglisod ka kay naa man masanghiran nga tao pareha anang sa among school amoang head among school head basin malain nga ing ani... ing ani imong gusto ing ana so dili... dili. RQ1_P5_FGD1

(I had a hard time, I could say that there is favoritism, the moment that I want to do one thing but it's really hard to do it because I could offend other people in doing such thing, for instance, I might offend our school head because of some actions.)

Furthermore, teachers find this practice offensive because they are unable to demonstrate their abilities and skills because their peers are supposed to be given preference and priority over them.

Motivation for promotion is affected

Micro-politics in the workplace affects the confidence of other teachers who submit for promotions, just because of the lack of internal connections. However, teachers also indicated that it has the tendency to affect their confidence in asking for promotions. During the focus group discussion, Participant 8 said:

Siguro para sa akua is makawala sa confidence in terms of submission kung magpapromote ka, kay pareha sa uban kay wala kaayo naghago pero ang uban pud naghago maayo pero wala silay saktong kapit didto sa taas so ang posibilidad nga mapromote sila is grabe kagamay na jud kaysa sa uban na nga. RQ1_P8_FGD1

(I think for me is that it will affect the confidence in terms of submission for promotions, like other people they are not struggling while others are in a difficult situation since they don't have connections which make their chance lesser than the others that have.)

For teachers who feel that they are not favored by their school heads, the presence of micropolitics in the workplace makes them reluctant and hesitant to apply for promotions in their workplace. According to the statement of participant 8, this practice is common in their organization and previous attempts of their peers and colleagues have made an imposition that outcomes were unfavorable.

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers

The findings of the study answered the second question of the study, which focuses on the coping mechanisms of secondary school teachers from their challenges experienced from the manifestation of micropolitics in the workplace. There were three themes that emerged, namely:

Accept the situation and be positive, and; Trust oneself and continue learning. In connection, micropolitics deal with the vulnerabilities of teachers, hence, teachers develop coping mechanisms to prevent themselves from getting harmed and influenced, they strive to take the best action that is possible in any given situation (McCarthy et al., 2019). The themes are indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Coping mechanisms of the Secondary School teachers.

| THEMES | CORE IDEAS |
|--|---|
| <p>Acceptance and positivity</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers accept the fact that there is the presence of micro-politics, try to see things on the positive side, and recognize their positions as employees and employ patience hoping to one day have their chance. • Teachers try to calmly settle their responses to the events that take place as a way to cope. • Teachers try to stay positive accepting the fact that problems cause emotional disturbance. • Teachers try to acknowledge the fact that challenges are part of life, and micro-politics at the workplace is only a part of it. • Teachers believe that with patience one will receive its own right time. • Teachers see that accepting things aids in overcoming the struggles. • Teachers see that despite competition due to micro-politics one must remain friendly. • Teachers tend to be positive in seeing things to be able to adjust in the activities. • Teachers maintain good camaraderie with colleagues. • Teachers accept the situation and become resourceful and promote and promote development for themselves. |
| <p>Self-trust and continue learning</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers try to strengthen their trust in themselves to cope. • Teachers see micro-politics with normalcy, a common activity present in a workplace. • Developing oneself more for promotion. • Teachers continue to learn everyday. |

Acceptance and positivity

Teachers have various experiences in the manifestation of micropolitics in their workplace. Consequently, participants of this study developed mechanisms that allowed them to move forward and continue their life despite adversities. Among these, teachers try to accept their situation and develop a positive outlook on life. This mechanism was most profound with the statement of Participant 2 during the in-depth interview:

Ang akong coping mechanism is calmness, kay pag-init kag ulo aw... basig magsumbagay ra mi. Bitaw positive lang jud ta always kay basin makaproblema unya ta nya maka experience ta ig-ana nya emotional disturbance unsaon nalang. RQ2_P2_IDI1

(My coping mechanism is calmness if you are hot-headed... we might knock each other. Always be positive because maybe we will have problems and then we will experience emotional disturbance, no matter what.)

Teachers tend to be positive in seeing things to be able to adjust in the activities. They recognize this mechanism, and they also associate it with calmness. Similarly, during the focus group discussion, Participant 5 posit:

Kanang dapat Kuan mangita kanang mga positive way tapos... adjustment sa imong workplace, sa imong co-teachers ana lang. RQ2_P5_FGD1

(Find a positive way then... adjustment in your workplace, with your co-teachers. Just like that.)

To stay positive, teachers try to look for ways to see things on the brighter side. From there, they can adjust to the situation, with their peers who practice and take advantage of micropolitics in their workplace. Also, participant 8 said:

I-accept nalang ang sitwasyon nga naa jud nang micro-politics sa atuang station then i-accept, mangita strategy para makadikit atung mga taohana then para madevelop ang self then mapromote. RQ2_P8_FGD1

(Accept the situation that there is micro-politics in the station, find other strategies to get close to those people then develop yourself so that you will get promoted.)

Micropolitics in the workplace is prevalent, and teachers deal with the situation in a variety of ways. This is concerning because it suggests that workplace micropolitics may result in conflict within the organization, causing coworkers to develop a rift in their connection. Others, however, prefer not to pay attention to the circumstance and instead redirect their concentration on their work, as told.

Self-trust and continue learning

In the process of experiencing micropolitics in the workplace, teachers strengthen their trust in themselves, for instance when they are demotivated to continue. Secondary school teachers try their best to push themselves to continue improving and learning instead of dwelling on unpleasant experiences. To overcome the stress associated with the experience, participant 2 said:

To trust yourself. Wala jud ka lain pagkatiwalaan ug magmahal, sa imong kaugalingon ra jud mao gani na ilang gina-ingon nga "Get up and enjoy, you only live once." So dili na ta mahuna huna anang mga negative vibes aron dili ta mastress. RQ2_P2_IDI1

(To trust yourself. You have no one else to trust and love, only yourself jud so they even say "Get up and enjoy, you only live once." So, we can no longer think about those negative vibes so that we are not stressed.)

On the other hand, teachers also see that accepting things aids in overcoming the struggles as well, then they learn and try their best to overcome the struggles. In the process of acceptance, as teachers, Participant 4 implied that to look into the lessons of their experiences they will be able to continue learning professionally and personally. During the FGD, participant 4 said:

I-accept ang tanan nga mga pagsulay as a teacher tapos ah mag-learn and of course be friendly. RQ2_P4_FGD1

(Accept all the struggles as an educator and learn something new and of course, be friendly.)

Participant 6 agreed with the statement of Participant 4 said:

Okay, para sa akoa continue learning every day and make a good camaraderie with your co-teachers. RQ2_P6_FGD1

(Okay, for me continue learning every day and make a good camaraderie with your co-teachers.)

Further, teachers are both teachers and learners, they can choose to learn every day, to choose to build camaraderie among their peers despite acts of manifestation of micropolitics in their workplace. By doing so, teachers not only be able to cope with the experience but also grow professionally and personally—practice their patience and sustenance for unfairness and ability to communicate effectively with peers to address misunderstandings. Manifestation of micropolitics in the workplace is a good way to attest themselves.

Perceptions of Teachers in Micro-politics and its Effects on their Lives

Based on the results, the researcher was able to reveal two emergent themes that answered the *the perceptions of Secondary School teachers in micro-politics and its effects on their lives*. The themes are, *micro-politics creates an unhealthy environment in the workplace, and; micro-politics causes biases in the workplace*. This is said in Table 3.

Table 3. *Perceptions of Secondary School teachers in micro-politics and its effects on their lives*

| THEMES | CORE IDEAS |
|---|--|
| Micro-politics creates unhealthy environment in the workplace. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers believe that micro-politics in the workplace is not good. • Teachers believe that micro-politics in the workplace must not be tolerated • Teachers believe that the unfairness of micro-politics in the workplace may create conflict in an organization. • Teachers believe that micro-politics in the workplace is not healthy as it creates chaos in the workplace. • Teachers believe that micro-politics in the workplace is not healthy as it creates chaos in the workplace. |
| Micro-politics causes biases in the workplace | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro-politics is unfair and caters favoritism. |

Micro-politics creates an unhealthy environment in the workplace

Nearing the end of the interview, participants were asked about their perceptions on the prevalence of micropolitics in their workplace. Expectedly, few of the participants believe that micro-politics in the workplace is not good. In an in-depth interview, participant 1 mentioned that humans are equal in the eyes of God, verbatim:

Ah isa lang dili siya maayo sa sulod sa working place kay God made us in different races but we are all equal in this world. RQ3_P1_ID11

(Ah, one thing is that it is no good in a workplace since God made us in different races but we are all equal in this world.)

The participant added, unfairness of micro-politics in the workplace may create conflict in an organization.

Ang dapat buhaton ana no kanang dili jud siya dapat itolerate jud dapat naa juy pantay pantay ug equality ba kay mahulog man gud na siya nga unfair pud sa uban ug kana makahatag ug conflict sa us aka organisasyon. RQ3_P1_IDI1

(What should be done to that is not to tolerate it, there should be fairness and equality because it can be unfair to others and it could create conflict in an organization.)

Again, teachers believe that micro-politics in the workplace is not healthy as it creates chaos in the workplace. In the FGD, Participant 5 explicit of this:

Para sa akua dili pud siya healthy it's because kay naay mga... kung sa kuan pa naay mga possibilities nga pwede magconflict mo sa inyuhang co-teachers tungod ana. RQ3_P5_FGD1

(For me, it was not healthy it is because there are... there are possibilities to make conflict with your co-teachers.)

Conflict within the organization may rise, not only with the teachers against their school leaders, but possibly with their peers as well. This is true because as previously mentioned in the results, teachers or employees themselves also tolerate and participate micropolitics for their own benefit. This is detrimental to the essence of camaraderie and overall work life experience of secondary school teachers.

Micro-politics causes biases in the workplace

Teachers see micro-politics as unfair and cater to favoritism. In return, teachers perceive this as a concept that actually causes biases in the workplace. As someone who has witnessed micropolitics in practice, teachers also found such practice as advantageous. This is apparent with the statement of a participant 7:

Pero para sa akua kuan medyo unfair siya, uhm especially kung visible kaayo ang micro-politics sa area kay daghan jud kaayo kung ibtang nato mga favoritism gani datingan so mas lamang jud to kung daghan ka kapit na. RQ3_P7_FGD1

(For me is kind of unfair, uhm especially when the micro-politics are visible in the area where there is a lot of favoritism.)

Based on the statement, apparently unfairness in the workplace is even more demotivating when school leaders are explicit of their favorite employees. This is expected because the essence of micropolitics is rooted on the idea that school heads are pulled by those who they think could allow them to manifest their plans (Tenuto et al., 2016; Rawling, 2019).

To sum up the perceptions of the participants, it is apparent that micropolitics in the workplace is prevalent. The responses of the participants were only categorized into two, teachers said that is detrimental to the healthy relationship of a workplace, within peers and leaders, teachers perceived this to be unhealthy.

After the analysis of the shared responses of the participants of the study, four themes emerged namely; *No freedom in the workplace; Taking advantage of the newly-appointed teachers; Existence of favoritism in the workplace; Motivation for promotion is affected.* Moreover, micropolitics is characterized by tactics of strategies used by individuals to allow them to resolve a problem in their favor.

There were three themes that emerged, namely: *Accept the situation and be positive; Ignore the existence of the situation; Trust oneself and continue learning.* In connection, micropolitics deal

with the vulnerabilities of teachers, hence, teachers develop coping mechanisms to prevent themselves from getting harmed and influenced.

Based on the results, the researcher was able to reveal two emergent themes that answered the *the perceptions of Secondary School teachers in micro-politics and its effects on their lives*. The themes are, *micro-politics creates an unhealthy environment in the workplace, and; micro-politics causes biases in the workplace*.

Lived experiences of Teachers on Micropolitics in their Workplace

After the analysis of the shared responses of the participants of the study, four themes emerged namely; *No freedom in the workplace; Exploitation of newly-appointed teachers; Favoritism in the workplace; Motivation for promotion is affected*. Moreover, micropolitics is characterized by tactics of strategies used by individuals to allow them to resolve a problem in their favor. In organizational theory, it includes all means to gain, create and use the power within an organization to achieve a person's goals on how they desire it (Kelchermans, 2017).

No freedom in the workplace. Findings revealed that secondary school teachers feel that they are indebted to their school heads who have done them a favor in the past, such that they are fearful of disobeying them at any point upon their service at their school. Actions that would indicate that you are trying to fight or contradict your school heads would mean that you are incapable of paying respect for them. They are left to follow and do things they want them to do regardless of the intentions of their school heads. Through this, teachers are told that they know how to pay respect for the invaluable help offered by their school heads. Unfortunately, this is an experience common among schools with micropolitics manifesting in their workplaces, an indirect way to influence the behavior of employees (Graber et al., 2017).

This is also congruent with Lindle (2020) who indicated that micropolitical efforts within an organization accord those with lower status to do how things should be done, and it should end. And an indication of imposed control and restriction of freedom of employees which is also apparent with the teachers. Exerted efforts by school leaders to assist less fortunate teachers are prevalent because it becomes a threshold for micropolitics to thrive in the workplace. It is a form that allows school heads to influence the behavior of their future employees to do things in their favor.

In addition, Lassila et al. (2017) that the agenda of controlling others to promote their objectives is a micropolitical strategy. Looking at the acts of helping less fortunate teachers because of underlying intentions for gaining control and influence over their actions is a manifestation of micropolitics thriving in a school setting workplace. Teachers who feel that their actions are restricted due to their need to gain the favor are a reflection of how school heads lead secondary school teachers to do activities to do their favor, exactly how they want it to be done and how it should end, an indication of oppression and use of power (Kelchermans & Ballet, 2019).

Exploitation of newly-appointed teachers. Upon reminiscing their experience, based on their statement it is apparent that novice teachers are often times targeted by micropolitical behaviors in the workplace. This is consistent to the study of Lassila et. al. (2017) of which employees who have likely served longer in the workplace, peers who have served longer in the learning institution would choose to leech on to the school heads and principals to ask for favors.

As a novice teacher, to be assigned in far-flung areas they are critical of committing mistakes, they are also taken from the guidance of senior teachers and school supervisors who ought to monitor their actions as newly employed teachers of the organization. Unfortunately, micropolitics deters them newly hired teachers from the guidance of knowledgeable leaders. Moreover, these actions, both by the peers and the school heads are indications that they are opting to control the actions of others to promote activities that best fit their desired results, a manifestation of micropolitical strategies (Lassila et. al., 2017).

In addition, the study Kelchermans and Ballet (2019) indicated that oppression, influence, and power are commonly imposed between novice members of an organization, which is evident on the experience imparted by participant 7. On the other hand, studies also suggest that these experiences are part of multidimensional facets of an organization that must be considered before teachers or any employees aim to apply for a job, that is from direct to indirect manipulation, control to the oppression of actions (Malen & Cochran, 2014), one must be equipped to handle these.

Favoritism in the Workplace. Teachers also find that this practice offending because they are unable to showcase their abilities and skills knowing that their peers are expected to be favored and prioritized over them. Micropolitics in the workplace involved explicit shows of favoritism over teachers who are on good terms with the school head (Rawlings, 2019). On the other hand, studies suggest that micropolitics in the workplace are existing because school heads rely on interpersonal relations with teachers to perform school operations hence, they lean on people or employees who can follow them to their reach their intentions (Tenuto et al., 2016), it is a skill that principals need to assure that they stay in their positions longer. This would imply that the presence of favoritism is a way for school heads to maintain good relations with those employees who will follow their footprints for reasons most favorable for them. Somehow, Tenuto et al. (2016) posits that such manifestation of micropolitics in the workplace allows school leaders to have a reliable set of hands that would assist them in making their intentions thrive.

Similarly, micropolitical strategies that would support its positive effects on the enactment of activities by the school head are supported by school stakeholders (Rawlings, 2019). School stakeholders, therefore, support that micropolitics and its ways in manifestation is good, because it allows school heads and themselves to have people working for them who will enact their interventions and activities to reach an outcome most favorable for them. Somehow, results and the support literature would suggest that favoritism regardless of its tendency to inhibit the talent, abilities, and capacity of teachers is a favorable strategy for school leaders to maintain and enact their legacy. Teachers are considered competent individuals. Alarming, the micropolitics in the workplace, its manifestation, and prevalence is determined by a teacher's belief in their capacity and their mission while in service (Chahkandi et al., 2016). From the response of participants, it is apparent that public secondary school teachers have deep ties with their self-concept as practices of micropolitics are affecting their motivation for applying for further offices. Teachers recognize that the practice is prevalent, and they have not been involved in it, hence, they become demotivated to apply for promotions.

Motivation for promotion is affected. Teachers who adhere to fairness and just process of promotions often times are at the opposing end of the experience are removed from their right to fairness. Consequently, affects their aims to re-apply and hope for higher positions. Somehow, this is detrimental to their psychological wellbeing and thoughts about their work, driven by self-interests (Chahkandi et al., 2016), if not addressed teachers may begin to succumb to acknowledging micropolitics in the workplace. Further, based on the theory of Micropolitics of Michel (Lindqvist et al. 2019), it states the use of power for self-interest. The negative consequences of the actions of leaders and apparent negligence and insensitivity to feelings and efforts of the teachers. Overall, teachers experienced being removed of their freedom to manifest their skills at work in fear of offending leaders (Lindle, 2020; Lassila et al., 2017; Graber et al., 2017), being taken advantage to, and favoritism (Malen et al., 2016; Rawling, 2016). Upon investigating on rational choice theory, small things that constitute micropolitical strategies are among the common reasons for conflicts to arise (Agi et al., 2016).

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers

There were three themes that emerged, namely: *Acceptance and positivity, and; Self-trust and continue learning.* In connection, micropolitics deal with the vulnerabilities of teachers, hence, teachers develop coping mechanisms to prevent themselves from getting harmed and influenced, they strive to take the best action that is possible in any given situation (McCarthy et al., 2019).

Acceptance and positivity. Experiences on micropolitics in the workplace are varied, in the process teachers utilize various ways to cope with the experience. This is alarming because this

would indicate that micropolitics in the workplace may cause conflict within the organization which may consequently lead co-workers to have a gap in their relationship. However, as told, to prevent this from happening others choose to not give attention to the situation, instead refocus it on their work.

It has been supported that micropolitics in the workplace is common, as not to espouse problems or conflicts with their peers, teachers choose to ignore the situation and just do as they are told (Torres, 2019; McCarthy et al., 2019). Furthermore, supported by Torres (2019) who mentioned that micropolitical ties may not always end in conflict, but others see it as a constructive manner for learning and improvement. Acts of ignoring such activities may indicate just like that. This is a way for teachers to avoid further conflicts and prevent themselves from getting hurt in the process (McCarthy et al., 2019). Apparently, ignoring situations that would cause a problem is a coping mechanism recognized and used by secondary school teachers. This would suggest the prevalence of micropolitics in the workplace because instead of acts that would pinpoint such activities, others would rather ignore it to avoid confrontations and acts that would risk their jobs.

Self-trust and continue learning. Teachers encourage themselves to continue living and move forward regardless of the hardships associated with micropolitics. To recognize that only they can love and trust themselves is a way to cope with the negative experience they have undergone because of micropolitics. Through this, teachers are able to live their work and personal lives fully without dwelling on the downsides of micropolitics. Effectively, this allowed secondary school teachers to fight against stress and other negative consequences micropolitics to their overall wellbeing and motivation to move forward.

This is congruent to the study of Torres (2019) who explained that micropolitics in the workplace could provide the teacher a context for learning and possible improvements. However, if their mission deviates from this, they are on the side that practice micropolitics despite stepping onto people just to gain their desired results. Unless recognized, workplaces will remain a ground for micropolitics to thrive, professional and personal stagnancy will thrive.

Similarly, the presence of micropolitics in education for some cases is considered an opportunity for learning (Kelchterman & Vanassche, 2017). Fortunately, based on the responses of the participants, it is apparent that they are able to recognize their experiences as an opportunity for growth and learning. Hence, secondary school teachers' continuous growth while in an organization that is possibly blinded by micropolitical tactics.

Furthermore, this section provides the findings on the challenges experienced by teachers by teachers on the presence of micropolitics in their workplace. Based on previous studies, McCarthy et al. (2019) said that people develop coping mechanisms that allow them to overcome negative adversities in life. Apparently, this was depicted in the study which highlighted teachers' positive coping mechanisms such as avoiding and ignoring conflicts within the organization (Torres, 2019; McCarthy et al., 2019). Adding to that, teachers become more focused on strengthening themselves both personally and professionally.

Further, the results imply that despite the negative and unpleasant experiences of teachers because of micropolitics in the workplace, they continue to strive in such environment (Kelchterman & Vanassche, 2017; Torres, 2019). However, it is also alarming that teachers have not mentioned any effort of the organization to address the issues. This might explain the perspectives of Micro-Political Theory, which micropolitical actions meant to bring people's effectiveness (Lindquist et. al., 2019).

Perceptions of Teachers in Micro-politics and its Effects on their Lives

Based on the results, the researcher was able to reveal two emergent themes that answered the *the perceptions of Secondary School teachers in micro-politics and its effects on*

their lives. The themes are, micro-politics creates an unhealthy environment in the workplace, and; micro-politics causes biases in the workplace.

Micro-politics creates an unhealthy environment in the workplace. . The secondary school teachers indicated that unfairness of micro-politics in the workplace may create conflict in an organization, resulting to an unhealthy working environment both for teachers and possibly their students who interact with them. Indeed, micropolitics in the workplace is perceived as not healthy for an organization. Not only does it have the tendency to cause conflict within the employees of the organization it is unfair and does not have considerations for those who are disadvantaged. Understandably, micropolitics is any means necessary to make use of power to control individuals to arrive at a favorable result for a person with power (Ketlchermans, 2017; Peters, 2017). However, despite this, studies have also found that micropolitics in the workplace is critical for keeping order in any group. Also, it has been found that it is a necessary skill for any organization to obtain because it allows leaders to thrive (Lindale, 2020).

Adding to that, this is supported by Torres (2019) who posited that schools must handle persistent tensions and make distributional decisions based on the influence exerted in many ways and in a number of areas, comparable actors in any political set-up at the site level. Koski et al. (2015) indicated that secondary school teachers practice this as well. Somehow, previous studies indicate that despite micropolitics being unhealthy for the teachers and employees, it keeps the organization itself to be in order. It allows school heads, and leaders to have closer ties with their organizations regardless of its effect to others, this is a good way to attain more immediate and collaborative way to accomplish tasks (Agrabia et al., 2020; Lindale, 2020).

Micro-politics causes biases in the workplace. Micropolitics in the workplace cause biases in the workplace, for those who are at its receiving end, teachers regard favoritism as an opportunity that could allow an employee to get their promotions if they just have the proper connections. Congruent to that, Agbaria et. al. (2020) instigated that micropolitics in the workplace is related to preserving quality education, in a similar fashion to Arab Junior High School in Israel. Through this, teachers are monitored and assisted by school leaders for better monitoring of an effective learning environment for teachers.

On the other hand, the prevalence and explicit display of favoritism particularly in terms of promotions would indicate lapses in fair working opportunity for teachers. Congruent to Tolentino (2015) who uncovered lapses in the protocols of DepEd on the implementation of fair positioning and rating framework for teachers. Which indicates that not only limited to Davao City, institutions in Davao Occidental may be experiencing the same lapses as well. Evidently, this study conducted in the latter province provide evidence for the findings of Tolentino. ' This is congruent to the premise of Micro-Political theory indicated that micropolitical acts are only beneficial to its beneficiaries and not those who are disadvantaged (Metter et al., 2016). Meanwhile, anchoring on Rational Choice Theory, teachers are able to decide and perceive better the actions that must be taken to help themselves to continue with better working experience and harmonious work with peers (Scribner et al., 2003; Weiske et. al, 2015).

Meanwhile, micropolitics in the workplace of teachers is prevalent. It robs teachers from living their lives, it removes them their freedom, they are taken advantaged, and acts of favoritism is prevalent, and are the consequences of its manifestation. Fortunately, teachers are equipped with the skills to adapt to their situations better manage themselves, and this was highlighted when teachers shared positively the development of their characters as person, and as employees that strive for fair and equal opportunities. The response of the participants could be stemmed on the idea that Rational Choice theory which emphasized that human experiences can decide and its effects to the person is highlighted based on the person's logical and unique reasoning (Scribner et al., 2003; Weiske et al., 2015; Agi et al., 2016).

On the other hand, results have also the shared that teachers believe that micropolitics in the workplace is detrimental their overall wellbeing. To keep it short, the experience on manifestation of micropolitics in the workplace is seen negatively by teachers, particularly the situation of DepEd, and how it is unable to mitigate such topic within the organization. Nonetheless, the

experiences and the results are support by the theory of Michelle (cited by Lindquist, 2019), are only beneficial and seem positively by the unfair officials themselves.

Implications to Practice

The exploration of the experiences of teachers on the practice of micropolitics in the workplace of public secondary schools has implications for different organizations and individuals, including future researchers.

Further, results has implications on the secondary school teachers. This attest teacher's competence and ability to manifest fairness and staying true to their missions. Teachers who stay true to their intentions and seek growth professionally and personally does not succumb to malpractice in the workplace. Unfortunately, prevalence of micropolitics in the workplace is indication that numerous have utilize such actions to influence their promotions.

Meanwhile, to the human resource, it was evident that teachers personally do thier best to cope with the challenges associated with micropolitics in the workplace. Secondary School teachers mentioned no external intervention nor, actions from the organization that aided and asisted them in the process of their experience.

Ultimately, to the Department of Education (DepEd) the findings of the study could indicate lapses in organizational leadership and practice of ethics. Indications on the tolerance of the practice are most apparent in the statements of the teachers which involved ignoring the problem and acceptance of its presence to avoid conflict. Further, results may be used as a basis for interventions to aid disadvantaged teachers.

Through this, the Department of Education (DepEd) may include the effective implementation of rules and regulations incorporating an effective and just system of career progression and promotion of teachers in DepEd, which shall include a competitive system of evaluation and selection. The study will encourage the DepEd's selection board to conduct responsible assessments on the qualities of applicants and to conduct a systematic assessment of candidates' qualifications and competence through examinations, skills tests, student ratings, trainings and seminars attended, years in service, and interviews. Regarding the DO no. 145 s. 2022, the implementaiton is new, and the revisions has recently been released, to realize its implementation, studies that focus on the manifestation of micropolitics in the workplace must be realized and brought forward. From there, the order's efficiency may begin to spread by targeting the roots and the implications of the previous malpractice.

Lastly, to the public secondary school teachers, the results of this study may indicate their tendency to adhere to social norms and susceptibility to oppression by their school leaders. This paper may provide them an avenue to view the practice of micropolitics in the light of those who are disadvantaged in the process of favoritism, and lack of freedom.

This would also pave the way for additional activities such as teambuilding for teachers and school administrators in order to foster better and stronger relationships and teamwork. They can use this study as a basis that there is a need to keep a record of the opportunities available to everyone. Thus, each teacher will have equal opportunity, rights, and privilege to advance in their careers.

Implication for Future Research

To future studies, research discussing organizational systems on the educational sector could be improved, sociology, psychology, and the behavior of employees and leaders could stem future studies, to create better working environment.

Moreover, studies may focus on creating interventions in response to this study. Actions plans about better delivery of service and care for the teachers, model contextualization, and possibly development of new organizational frameworks to avoid influence of micropolitics could become research topics.

Lastly, perceptions of people who saw micropolitics in another light could also be done. Anchoring on this paper, the part of the 'abusers' or peers who participate in micropolitics could be understood further through another phenomenological study, ethnography, possibly even quantitative studies. Depending on the area of interest, future research may anchor on the findings of this study.

4. CONCLUSION

In conducting this study, I have come to know and understand various professionally and personally challenging experiences that my peers are currently facing. Apparently, manifestation of micropolitics in the workplace influence teacher's motivation to ask for promotions due to explicit displays of favoritism. Also, feelings of being controlled and indirect influence of the experience to their present situations inhibit teachers from manifesting thier talents, and abilities. As a professional seeking growth, I have found it disheartening to learn that others are unable to showcase their talents, and full potential becuae of this phenomenon.

Over the course of the study, I have also learned the coping mechanisms that teachers—educators like myself, utilize in order to cope with the effects of micropolitics in the workplace. Others simply chooses to be optimistic; others choose to ignore it hoping that through it, they should be able to avoid conflict with peers and deliver quality education harmoniously. Such way of coping piqued my interest, as I am also working in a competitive professional workplace, I could not fathom how any of my peers would voluntarily seek refuge behind their positivity in order to conflict. The focus and their dedication to the teaching profession overrides any challenges that may come their way.

Further, when asked about their perceptions, findings concluded that micropolitics in the workplace is detrimental to the relationship of employees of an organization. For teachers, micropolitics may espouse conflict, and it is also not healthy for any organization. Hence, it deters camaraderie and collaboration in the workplace, including lapses in the framework of fair and just promotion system in the province. For me, these statements from my peers simply entails that they understand the importance of camaraderie, collaboration and building of relationship in the teaching profession. In it lies the delivery of quality education that we can only attain if we work together.

In conclusion, micropolitics in the workplace is prevalent and is detrimental to the wellbeing of teachers. As a professional teacher and as an employee, the result of this study may espouse interventions on the matter. This practice may be be targeted by leaders of learning institutions in order to observe a fair and just workplace for teachers, for better organizational relations, and improve the quality of services offered. Only by addressing problems behind the curtains of positivity and avoidance will we be able to overcome difficulties in the education system of the schools, not only our province but possibly in our nation. This study has opened my eyes to a problem hidden because of tolerance, hence, in-depth studies about these cases must be pursued, and appropriate interventions may be crafted to create just, fair and collaborative foundation for the futures of our nation.

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