

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

ABSTRACT

This paper explored the experiences of teachers who have witnessed or experienced firsthand the manifestation of micropolitics in the workplace. This employed a phenomenological approach and utilized in-depth interviews to gather data on teachers' challenges, coping, and insights and results were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of the study revealed that micropolitics in the workplace is prevalent. Four themes emerged in the life experiences of the teachers, namely: *no freedom in the workplace; exploitation of newly-appointed teachers; favoritism in the workplace, and; affected 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 teachers' workplaces creates an *unhealthy environment and causes bias* in the workplace that may cause a rise among peers. Nonetheless, the results have implications for the current system of DepEd and the local offices that handle the division. Thus, appropriate interventions must help teachers 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

With 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 organizational goals (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 et. al., 2008).

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, manipulation, and autonomy, was used (Lindqvist et. al., 2019; Vanassche & 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 of hiring teachers are not followed. Some are made to pay a large amount of money to the DepEd officials and school heads or donate home appliances to process appointment papers, promotions, and hiring processes. Concerning this, there is also evidence that the quality of teachers is also inequitably distributed in schools (Kooli & Abali, 2021), 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 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, regarding additional literature discussing micro-politics from the perspectives of teachers and schools, there remains a lack of studies in the local setting, studies on micro-politics in public schools, and teachers' experiences 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. In addition, 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 of education they provide and their student's academic journey. The results of this study can be used as a reference to mediate any form of the appositive effect of this phenomenon by investigating the meaning of how these lived experiences shape the teachers' perception, motivation, and performance in their respective workplaces.

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 the actors in a situation perceived them. In the human sphere, this translates typically 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)**.

Research Participants

Using purposive sampling, fifteen (15) Public Secondary School teachers in five (5) Schools in the **Division of Davao Occidental, Mindanao, Philippines**, 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: at least five (5) years of working experience in the mentioned institutions and was able to identify the manifestation of micro-politics in the workplace. Meanwhile, excluded are those who had less than three years of experience. **The interview was conducted between November 2021 to January 2022.**

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 describes the processes which were followed in the study.

Ethical Considerations

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

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Lived experiences of Teachers on Micropolitics in their workplace

After analyzing the shared responses of the study participants, 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, four themes emerged: *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 or strategies used by individuals to allow them to resolve a problem in their favor. The organizational theory includes all means to gain, create and use the power within an organization to achieve a person's goals on how they desire (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 their actions of the teachers. • Teachers experience feelings of being controlled which is a challenge. • The teachers feel they are indebted and 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 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 of micro-politics in the workplace, and it blinds school heads from seeing the potential of other teachers. • The teachers see that some cannot 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 is when principals favor old employees over 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 because of the lack of internal connections.

No freedom in the workplace

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

Fearing to disobey or fight is challenging because of the word "utang na loob." If you try to fight for it, it turns into something that has nothing to repay for that particular person. That is why I am just following what they order. RQ1_P2_IDI2

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:

Based on my experiences, secondary school education face forces within the school because the school head controls them. RQ1_P5_FGD1

In the statement, it is apparent that participants recognized that school heads impose on their teachers that they must follow. This challenges teachers' efficacy as their actions is restricted in the process. The same participant added:

You cannot move freely because you seem to be controlled. RQ1_P5_FGD1

According to the findings, secondary school instructors believe they owe their school heads a favor since they have done them in the past, and they are afraid of offending them at any moment throughout their service at their school. Actions that indicate you seek to argue with or contradict your school leaders indicate that you cannot 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 appreciation for the vital assistance provided by their school principals.

Exploitation of newly-appointed teachers

Novice teachers, **starting their work**, they noticed how micropolitics manifested in their workplace. When they were newly hired, principals often gave them tasks that would require them to serve far-flung areas. Where supposedly, experienced and veteran teachers ought to fulfill theirs. 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 followed orders.

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

As a novice at that time, ma'am, we had this assignment wherein we needed to climb the mountain to pay a visit. However, those close to the principal approached him, and since they were close, they could leech over just because it was tiring and muddy. Then I needed a guide since I was still new and had no experience with the place I was assigned to go. RQ1_P7_FGD1

Similarly, participant 5 added:

In the workplace, when they want you to do something, it would be appointed to those who have been assigned there longer. You, as a novice, have to be vigilant. Sometimes principals favor those they have worked longer with compared to us. That was what I experienced. RQ1_P5_FGD1

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

Favoritism in the Workplace

The study participants 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 not to offend their school head and not lose their favor. During the in-depth interview, Participant 1 posited:

It affects (my position) as an educator. I feel offended because if I show some skills, it would seem they cannot see it. After all, there are other priorities before me.
RQ1_P1_IDI1

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

For me, it is unfair, especially when the micro-politics are visible in the workplace. There is a lot of favoritism. RQ1_P7_FGD1

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

I had a hard time, and I could say that there is favoritism when I want to do one thing, but it is hard to do because I could offend others by doing such a thing. For instance, I might offend our school head because of some actions. RQ1_P5_FGD1

Furthermore, teachers find this practice offensive. After all, they cannot 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 because of the lack of internal connections. However, teachers also indicated that it affects their confidence in asking for promotions. During the focus group discussion, Participant 8 said:

I think for me is that it will affect my confidence in terms of submission for promotions. Like other people, they are not struggling while others are in a difficult situation since they do not have connections which makes their chances lesser than the others.
RQ1_P8_FGD1

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

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers

The study's findings answered the second question, which focuses on the coping mechanisms of secondary school teachers from the challenges experienced by the manifestation of micropolitics in the workplace. **Two themes** emerged: *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 and strive to take the best possible action in any given situation (McCarthy, 2019). The themes are indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Coping mechanisms of the Secondary School teachers.

THEMES	CORE IDEAS
Acceptance and positivity	<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, 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 that problems cause emotional disturbance. • Teachers try to acknowledge 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 proper time. • Teachers see that accepting things aids in overcoming struggles. • Teachers see that despite competition due to micro-politics, one must remain friendly. • Teachers tend to be positive in seeing things to adjust to the activities. • Teachers maintain good camaraderie with colleagues. • Teachers accept the situation, become resourceful, development for themselves.
Self-trust and continue learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers try to strengthen their trust in themselves to cope. • Teachers see micro-politics as normalcy, an everyday activity present in the workplace. • Developing oneself more for promotion. • Teachers continue to learn every day.

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:

My coping mechanism is calmness. If you are hot-headed, we might fight with each other. Always be positive because maybe we will have problems and experience emotional disturbance, no matter what. RQ2_P2_IDI1

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

Find a positive way, then adapt in your workplace with your co-teachers. Just like that. RQ2_P5_FGD1

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:

Accept the situation of micro-politics in the station, find other strategies to get close to those people then develop yourself to get promoted. RQ2_P8_FGD1

Micropolitics in the workplace is prevalent, and teachers deal with the situation in various 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

When 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. You have no one else to trust and love, only yourself, 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. RQ2_P2_IDI1

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

Accept all the struggles as an educator, learn something new, and be friendly. RQ2_P4_FGD1

Participant 6 agreed with the statement of Participant 4 said:

Okay, for me, we have to continue learning every day and make an established camaraderie with our co-teachers. RQ2_P6_FGD1

Further, teachers are both teachers and learners, and 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 cannot only 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. Manifesting micropolitics in the workplace is a good way to attest to themselves.

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

Based on the results, the researcher revealed two emergent themes that answered *perceptions of Secondary School teachers in micro-politics and its effects on their lives*. The themes are that *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
<p>Micro-politics creates unhealthy environment in the workplace.</p>	<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.
<p>Micro-politics causes biases in the workplace.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro-politics is unfair and caters to favoritism.

Micro-politics creates an unhealthy environment in the workplace

Nearing the end of the interview, participants were asked about their perceptions of the prevalence of micropolitics in their workplace. Expectedly, a 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, one thing is that it is no good in a workplace since God made us of different races, but we are all equal in this world. RQ3_P1_IDI1

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

We must not tolerate it, and there should be fairness and equality because it can be unfair to others and it could create conflict in an organization. RQ3_P1_IDI1

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

For me, it was not healthy. It is because there are possibilities to make conflict with your co-teachers. RQ3_P5_FGD1

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

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 causes biases in the workplace. As someone who has witnessed micropolitics in practice, teachers also found such practice advantageous. This is apparent in the statement of participant 7:

For me, it is unfair, especially when the micro-politics are visible in the workplace. There is a lot of favoritism. RQ3_P7_FGD1

DISCUSSION

Lived experiences of Teachers on Micropolitics in their workplace

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

In addition, Lassila et. al. (2017) believe that the agenda of controlling others to promote their objectives is a micropolitical strategy. Although, acts 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—Lassila et. al. (2017) believes this to be an organizational strategy to gain favors and keep order. Teachers who feel that their actions are restricted due to their need to gain 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, 2019).

Exploitation of newly-appointed teachers. Upon reminiscing their experience, based on their statement, it is apparent that micropolitical behaviors in the workplace often target novice teachers. This is consistent with the study of Lassila et. al. (2017), in which employees who have likely served longer in the workplace and peers who have served longer in the learning institution would choose to leech on to the school heads and principals to ask favors. 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 by Kelchermans (2019) indicated that oppression, influence, and power are commonly imposed between novice members of an organization, which is evident in 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 this practice offensive because they cannot showcase their abilities and skills, knowing that their peers are expected to be favored and prioritized over them. Micropolitics in the workplace involves graphic shows of favoritism over teachers on good terms with the school head (Rawlings, 2019). On the other hand, studies suggest that micropolitics in the workplace exist 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 ensure 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 employees who will follow their footprints for the most favorable reasons. Somehow, Tenuto et. al. (2016) posit 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). 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 mission while in service (Kooli, 2019; 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 different 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 a just process of promotion often are at the opposing end of the experience and 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 well-being 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 (Lindqvist et. al., 2019) states, the use of power is for self-interest. The negative consequences of the actions of leaders and apparent negligence and insensitivity to the 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 of, and favoritism (Malen & Cochran, 2016; Rawling, 2016). When investigating rational choice theory, small things that constitute micropolitical strategies are among the common reasons conflicts arise (Agi et al., 2016).

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers

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

Acceptance and positivity. Experiences of 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, consequently leading coworkers to have a gap in their relationships. However, as told, to prevent this from happening, others choose not to pay attention to the situation and 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 do as they are told (Torres, 2019; McCarthy, 2019). Furthermore, supported by Torres (2019) 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 (McCarthy et. al., 2019). Ignoring situations that would cause a problem is a coping mechanism recognized and used by secondary school teachers.

Self-trust and continue learning. Teachers encourage themselves to continue living and move forward regardless of the hardships associated with micropolitics. Recognizing 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 can 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 of micropolitics to their overall well-being and motivation to move forward. This is congruent with the study of Torres (2019), who explained that micropolitics in the workplace could provide the teacher with a context for learning and possible improvements. However, if their mission deviates from this, they are on the side that

practices micropolitics despite stepping onto people to gain their desired results. Unless recognized, workplaces will remain a ground for micropolitics to thrive, and professional and personal stagnancy will thrive. Similarly, the presence of micropolitics in education, in some cases, is considered an opportunity for learning (Vanassche & Kelcherman, 2015).

Further, the results imply that despite teachers' negative and unpleasant experiences because of micropolitics in the workplace, they continue to strive in such an environment (Vanassche & Kelcherman, 2015; 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, in which micropolitical actions are 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 revealed two emergent themes that answered **the perceptions of Secondary School teachers in micro-politics and its effects on their lives**. The themes are that *micro-politics creates an unhealthy workplace environment and micro-politics causes biases in the workplace*.

Micro-politics creates an unhealthy workplace environment. The secondary school teachers indicated that the unfairness of micro-politics in the workplace might create conflict in an organization, resulting in an unhealthy working environment for teachers and possibly their students who interact with them. Indeed, workplace micropolitics is perceived as unhealthy for an organization. Not only does it tend to cause conflict among the organization's employees, but it is also unfair and does not have consideration for those who are disadvantaged. Understandably, micropolitics is any means necessary to use power to control individuals to arrive at a favorable result for a person with power (Kelchermans, 2017; Peters, 2017). However, despite this, studies have also found that micropolitics in the workplace is critical for keeping order in any group. 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 several areas, comparable actors in any political set-up at the site level.

Micro-politics causes 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 have the proper connections. Congruent to that, Agbaria et. al. (2020) instigated that micropolitics in the workplace is related to preserving quality education, similar to Arab Junior High Schools in Israel. Through this, teachers are monitored and assisted by school leaders to monitor an effective learning environment for teachers better. On the other hand, the prevalence and explicit display of favoritism, particularly in terms of promotions, would indicate lapses in fair working opportunities for teachers. Congruent with Tolentino (2015), who uncovered lapses in the protocols of DepEd on implementing fair positioning and rating framework for teachers. This indicates that not only limited to Davao City, institutions in Davao Occidental may also be experiencing the same lapses. This study conducted in the latter province provides evidence for the findings of Tolentino.

Implications to Practice

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

Further, results **have** implications for secondary school teachers. That tests teachers' competence and ability to manifest fairness, staying true to their missions. Teachers who stay true to their intentions and seek growth professionally and personally do not succumb to malpractice in **the** workplace. Unfortunately, the prevalence of micropolitics in the workplace is an indication that numerous have **utilized** such actions to influence their promotions.

Meanwhile, to the human resource, it was evident that teachers personally do **their** best to cope with the challenges associated with micropolitics in the workplace. Secondary School teachers mentioned no external intervention or actions from the organization that aided and **assisted** them in their experience.

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

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 team building for teachers and school administrators, to foster better and stronger relationships and teamwork. They can use this study as a basis for there is need to keep a record of the opportunities available to everyone. Thus, each teacher will have equal opportunities, rights, and privileges to advance in their career.

4. CONCLUSION

In conducting this study, I have learned and understood various professionally and personally challenging experiences that my peers are currently facing. Manifestation of micropolitics in the workplace influences 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 their talents and abilities. As a professional seeking growth, I have found it disheartening to learn that others cannot showcase **their** talents and full potential **because** of this phenomenon.

Throughout the study, I have also learned the coping mechanisms that teachers—educators like myself- utilize to cope with the effects of micropolitics in the workplace. Others choose 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 a 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. Their focus and their dedication to the teaching profession override 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, which is also unhealthy for any organization. Hence, it deters camaraderie and collaboration in the workplace, including lapses in the province's fair and just promotion system. For me, these statements from my peers entail that they understand the importance of camaraderie, collaboration, and building relationships 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 detrimental to teachers' well-being. As a professional teacher and as an employee, the result of this study may espouse interventions on the matter. Only by addressing problems behind the curtains of positivity and avoidance will we be able to overcome difficulties in the education system of schools, not only in our province but possibly 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 a just, fair, and collaborative foundation for the future of our nation.

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