

POLITICS OF TEACHER'S PROMOTION SYSTEM IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of teachers on the prevalence of politics in the promotional system of their workplace. This utilized the phenomenological approach, gathered data using in-depth interviews and focus groups to have a deeper apprehension of their lived experiences, how it affects the teachers, and their insights. Results of the study revealed that politics in the workplace is widespread, and depending on their organizational position could offer either benefits or drawbacks. Four themes are emanated from the lived experiences of the participants, namely: *voluminous requirement*, *unjust selection*, *nepotism/ Padrino system* and *gender discrimination*. It revealed that nepotism/ Padrino system is among the most prominent situations encountered by educators at work. Teachers narrated how their unpleasant experiences led them to find the motivation to grow both professionally and personally. On the other hand, the effects of politics on the promotional system revealed two major themes: *favorable effects* and *unfavorable effects*, indicating that their effectiveness at work is compromised. Expectedly, their insights reflected that the current promotional systems of learning institutions must be improved. Two main themes emerged from their insights, specifically: *reforms and active participation*, and; *professional and personal growth*. Nonetheless, this sheds light on the current promotional system of DepEd, thus appropriate interventions must be done to create a fair environment and offer equal opportunities for

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I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a pressing and raising awareness of the presence of politics in aspects concerning various organizations, from governmental to aspects that are fundamentally considered small-scale workplaces and the institutions that provide learning services to the community (Tolentino, 2016). Alarming, in the aspect of fairness in the rewards system, the promotional system politics roots injustice to the oppressed. In return, this endangers the psychological well-being of any employee, such as the teachers in learning institutions, which affects the service provided to the community of students (Byrne et. al., 2017; Rubel & Kee, 2015; Chamorro-Premuzic, & Bhaduri, 2017).

This aspect of politics in institutions and schools is an important discourse that needs to be expounded and explored because education is, according to Lieberman & Campbell (2016), the core of numerous nations' socioeconomic advancement. The same authors have stated that education is an apparatus to empower a person to make all adjusted investments being developed by securing information, ability, and attitudinal change. In light of this, Ercetin and Findik's (2016) instructive system for schools and organizations to be effective should pull in qualified individuals to the calling and furnish them with the best conceivable working conditions. Despite this need, one of the most significant difficulties is that political procedures and practices affect the overwhelming education sector. McGrath (2017) indicated that political issues in promotion allude to the elements and battle of power.

In addition, leaders appear to have asymmetric data on various workers due to favoritism politics, and this personal limitation is resolved simply by choosing the more familiar nominee. Often the past successes of workers can be insignificant if those in charge of judging future achievements have not been closely observed (Chamorro-Premuzic, & Bhaduri, 2017). Consequently, this affects work performance, results in psychological distress, and may lead the organization to increased turnover rates, demotivation, and resignation (Rubel & Kee, 2015; Chamorro-Premuzic, & Bhaduri, 2017).

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, there are instances of political factors inside the Department of Education. It has been identified that desirable outcomes from this department are due to the presence of politics. This practice of its members supposedly saturates the promotional system among the public schools it handles. Villanueva and Cruz (2019) indicate this notion to have resulted in the inclusion of power-driven groups/opportunists in school organizations which could disrupt fairness. In the past, Tolentino (2016) investigated whether or not the standard rating and positioning framework of hiring candidates for teaching were followed—it was found that this was not. Further, it was found to be caused by the political involvement of leaders in the educational system.

Mentioned in the above introductory sentences are the supporting details which entail the presence of politics in schools—the workplace of educators. As an educator, the researcher sees that there should be fairness in hiring candidates for every teaching position. To ask and receive any form of exchange to hire one candidate over a more suitable candidate should not be an option. The educational sector advocates for learning that could be afforded and given to those who strive hard to attain it—this does not exclude the right of educators to be treated the same as the students they are teaching—to have the right to see the organizational equivalent of their educational attainment and achievement.

In relation to this, it can be noted that there remains a dearth in the literature regarding the manifestation of politics in the promotional system of schools, particularly in discussing the experience of educators, their perceptions, lived experiences, mechanisms, and insights. In response to this, the research sees an urgent need to conduct this study in the Province of Davao del Sur, which currently does not have any published literature discussing the locality's educators' experience. Another reason for this study to thrive is to provide evidence regarding factors that hinder educators' ability to provide better service for education, including insufficient educational or organizational positions due to this rarely discussed political affair in schools. Also, this study's results could benefit the Department of Education (DepEd). This could allow the government to focus on contextual factors that hinder better community service. Hence, the results become beneficial to educators and learners alike.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed the qualitative research design utilizing the phenomenological method. The researcher believes that it was more appropriate to use the qualitative design to understand more the nuance of the lived experiences of Secondary School teachers regarding the manifestation of politics in the promotional system of schools. This was in line with what Creswell (2013) contended: qualitative studies are often conducted to explore the issues of an understudied population, especially when there are only a few conceptual studies in the area.

Research Participants

Using purposive sampling, twelve (12) Public Secondary School Teachers from Public Secondary Schools of the Division of Davao del Sur were invited to participate in the data-gathering process. In particular, there were five (5) participants for the In-depth interview and seven (7) participants for FGD. In relation to this, the sample size was focused on Creswell's (2013) guidelines which recommended interviewing at least 5 to 25 informants before data saturation is achieved.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the collected data, the researcher adopted the model of phenomenology data analysis of Colaizzi (1978).

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 on the Politics in the Promotional system in Public Schools

Presented in the succeeding paragraphs of this section are themes and core ideas that emerged after analysis of the data that answered the probing questions of the first research objective on the lived experiences of secondary school teachers on the politics of the promotional system of schools. Based on the shared experiences and sentiments of the study participants, I have come to realize that teachers who have experienced politics in the workplace are both becoming cynical and almost demotivated in doing their tasks, even losing hope in filing for another promotional opportunity. Adding that, they become apathetic. In connection, the study's findings revealed four themes: *voluminous requirements; nepotism/ Padrino system; unjust selection; and; gender discrimination*. This will be further discussed in the following sections, respectively.

Voluminous requirements

This theme's array of experiences indicates their disappointment and demotivation due to difficulty complying with the requirements in looking for the promotions they deserve because of the number of requirements needed. It was revealed that in the course of trying to complete the requirements, they encounter politics in the promotional system of their workplaces. During the in-depth interview, participant 5 was explicit about this and stated:

Several teachers have been in this field for years and ended up retiring without promotion.

Why? Because of reasons one is the requirement, and the requirement is so voluminous.
RQ1_P5_IDI5

Participant 5 said that teachers retire before completing the requirements needed to apply for the promotion they hoped to reach. Also, participant 7, one of the participants of the FGD, enumerated some of the requirements needed for applying for a promotion in their workplace; they said:

*I experienced many hardships while undergoing the promotion. One is preparing papers, undergoing demonstration teaching, and many others. The burden itself will make you super stressed.*RQ1_P7_FGD1

This means that for a disadvantaged teacher, the requirements that must be compiled in the absence of politics in the process of conforming with standards for promotion are a lot. Unfortunately, this is frequent among teachers as they become older and thus are stressed out by the extensive list of candidates for the promotion they believe they are entitled.

Nepotism/ Padrino system

It was revealed in the study that teachers experience the Padrino system. Teachers' familiarity with nepotism and the Padrino system is more common because of the constant practice of politics in their workplace. They experienced unjust politics in the promotional system because of the connections of their peers to higher authorities who use their power to influence others. Hence, the prevalence. This was emphasized on the FGD, where participant 9 supported this:

My experience about politics, ma'am, would be that I had witnessed unfair promotion because of the Padrino system. So, because the supervisor's son is with me, our principal's friend, there are many biases, and he is favored. RQ1_P9_FGD1

Teachers are exposed to the explicit manifestation of politics in their workplace's promotional systems. Children of school leaders or higher authorities in the workplace are handed their positions. Similarly, participant 7 said:

When she (a peer) was promoted instead of me, I was okay. I became okay with it. Even if my colleagues and I believed that I was better than her, I discovered that she was the Goddaughter of one of the higher officials (school) in the division. Knowing that, I thought that it was the reason why she got promoted. RQ1_P7_FGD1

Another, participant 8 said:

The competition has not started yet; I know something is going on. She was the second cousin of our principal, which it seems, is being favored. It was upsetting because I knew myself. I know my abilities and skills. I am confident that the promotion is more well deserved for me than for her. That opportunity is being snatched away because nepotism has crushed my hope. RQ1_P8_FGD1

The difference in how others perceive the promotion of others is affected by how they see their peers and the positions they have been assigned to. For others, the system of higher-ups connecting to lower-bracket employees is innately biased as they use their powers to help those closer to their affective aspects. Hence, acts of nepotism and Padrino system effects are among the most common ways in which politics in the promotional system of teachers' experience.

Unjust Selection

Politics in the workplace also manifest through the unjust selection of participants or teachers chosen to be promoted or to participate in events. Despite the gap in capacity, skills, and mastery over the tasks that could be done, school heads choose those who can offer them personal tokens or requests without question. This is evident with the event that took place, which participant 3 also experienced firsthand:

Our school principal favored my coworker over me simply because she could give anything to our school head, such as food, a ride to his cars, supplies, name it. He was promoted not because of his skills but because of the hidden actions that he thought he hid well. Most teachers sided with me because I was more capable than him. But we had to keep our silence. RQ1_P3_IDI3

Similarly, participant 8 of the FGD also said:

My experience in politics in the promotional system is the unjust selection for promotion. In our school, we are under the impression that whoever has the most connection will be successful. Sad, but true. I was processing my promotion when one of my coworkers was in the process of getting promoted. She was the second cousin of our (school) principal who received their favor. RQ1_P8_FGD1

In addition, to the explicit displays of endorsements by school heads, others are devastated because of the unjust promotion of their peers. Evident in the statement of participant 1, which said:

Apparently, I found out that our mayor endorsed the teacher to get the position I am trying to apply for. However, that was devastating on my part, I was in service even before her, but she was promoted over me. RQ1_P1_IDI1

Somehow, due to unjust promotions of their peers, not only do teachers feel demotivated they also feel that their actions are degraded. At some point, clients recognize that the number of years in service is negligible. Similarly, Participant 6 mentioned:

It was degrading. I had deprecated myself thinking my skills were enough to get promoted. It was a low point when I compared my wealth to that coworker of mine. It had discouraged me from reapplying for promotion. RQ1_P3_T3

Unfortunately, this makes teachers reluctant or demotivated to reapply for a promotion. Another participant 6 agreed:

The female teacher in our school, Ma'am, was disappointed in me. And for their future dream. It came to the point that we were itching to transfer to a much more comfortable institution that valued our rights and skills. RQ1_P6_T6

The idea of unjust promotion is not new for teachers; they know how others may be chosen over them. The unjust selection of employees to be promoted is common. This reality may lead to learning institutions led by people with financial power who lack the skill, knowledge, and legitimate credentials.

Gender Discrimination

Teachers also experience that male employees are favored over female employees. Some school heads believe that men are more capable than women, which leads to favoritism. Participant 6 said:

Yes, ma'am. It was obvious that our principal had a bad taste in his mouth that a female working alongside him was more capable or than capable than him. Let alone that female getting promoted. Reason and motive of his favor to that male colleague of mine. RQ1_P6_FGD1

This experience of the teachers is true to events that took place and are critical in the population of women school leaders of our community. This manifestation of politics in the workplace may be taken advantage of by peers and colleagues, which could only further downside the fair evaluation of candidates for promotions.

Effects of the Experience on the Teachers

After analyzing the data gathered, the themes and core ideas that answered the study's second research question, 2. How do these live experiences affect secondary school teachers? and its sub-themes will be presented below: *Favorable Effects* and sub-themes: *New Found Motivation*; and *Positivity*. Then the *Unfavorable Effects* included the sub-themes; *Abuse of Power*; *Degraded*, and *Emotionally and mentally affected*.

Favorable Effects

Employees benefited from the prominence of politics in the educational institution's promotional system. Despite the difficult experiences and psychological and emotional harm it causes instructors, they created strategies to continue and strive in their career paths, both as employees and persons, amid the malpractice.

Newfound Motivations. In terms of the positive coping of teachers to the experience, teachers use this experience to anchor their next goals. Somehow, the experience motivated the teachers to stay true to themselves and use it as a driving factor in why they hope to move forward. Participant 4 shared their experience about this and said:

You only really motivate yourself because you compete. However, think of it as healthy competition. If you want to be promoted, you should also serve righteously for it to be worth it. RQ2_P4_IDI4

In addition, teachers begin to encourage and influence others to show their capacity, expose the malpractice and not tolerate such an action. This experience became a driving force for them to be more vocal about their experiences as well, according to a statement from participant 3:

So, for me, to my fellow co-teachers, I encourage them to show that they will complain about such a harvested kind system in their school. And, do not ever let this (stop) the practice of your rights. RQ2_P3_IDI3

Also, because of the experience of politics in the workplace, teachers are more inspired to prove to themselves that they can reach their goals without the help of others. Participant 8 said:

You only really motivate yourself because you compete. Nevertheless, think of healthy competition. If you want to be promoted, you have to serve the right one if it is worth it. RQ2_P8_FGD1

Furthermore, politics in the school promotion system has given teachers a new reason to utilize their rights and be more motivated to achieve their objectives. This could indicate that other teachers saw the experience as an eye-opener that helped them manage and perceive the unjust practice in a more positive light.

Positivity. Teachers have also learned to be optimistic, as they lean on the idea that one must not lose hope even when they know others will be chosen over them. This allowed the clients to see the experience in a positive light and overcome the negative consequences of the experience on their emotional and mental health. Participant 4 stated:

We cannot just lose hope because others will be chosen over them. So that is it. RQ2_P4_IDI4

Participant 10 was also hopeful. They indicated:

My coping mechanism was watching Korean movies because his stories, like ours, inspired me in the squid game bah. Never lose hope. Do not dwell on bad habits. We fight. RQ2_P10_FGD1

Similarly, positivity is manifested with the outlook that their future is still ahead of them and such an experience cannot ruin it. Participant 7 was assertive of their experience and stated:

But it did not let it get to me. I have a bright future and will not be ruined by that kind of people." RQ2_P7_FGD1

Similar to that is the teachers' conviction to cope, move forward, and continue fighting for what they deserve. Participant 6 was sure of their belief. They said:

I did not let it affect me. I am strong enough to cope and move forward. Take it positively; at least I have learned to fight for what I think is right. Yes, ma'am, fight. RQ2_P6_FGD1

Teachers feel they have a firm grasp on what impacts them and what does not; they see the experience as a manifestation that has helped them grow into better people who positively see the circumstance and use it to their benefit. Because they were positive and could picture their own life goals in their brains, they may have gone through the experiences of being subjected to political rejections in their application for promotions.

Unfavorable Effects

Based on the findings, it was also revealed that teachers' lived experiences of the prevalence of politics in the promotional system of the learning institution have unfavorable effects. Accordingly, it discovered three sub-themes: *Abuse of Power*, *Degraded*, and *Emotionally and mentally affected*.

Abuse of Power. The prevalence of politics in the workplace is explicit, as shown in the discussion of the participant's responses. Among its effects on the teachers is the apparent abuse of power held by higher officials, school heads, or organizational leaders of the learning institutions. Undesirably, participant 1 shared their experience and said:

Of course, it will affect the teachers working there undesirably. That clearly displayed abuse of power and nepotism among friends and public servants. RQ2_P1_IDI1

The display of power, a symbol of oppression, affects more than just the teachers. It affects them and some of their peers, close associates, friends, and even public servants. The presence of politics influences others to abuse power, which according to participant 1, is practiced by their peers.

Meanwhile, participant 3 asserts that politics create a toxic environment, and said:

This is a toxic environment; of course, getting your goals crushed because of an unjust administrator is very disappointing. This will impact undesirably on the image and the reputation of the school. As well as the teachers working in the institution. RQ2_P3_IDI3

Degraded. Among the many effects of politics that deter deserving teachers from growing is the feeling of being degraded. Not only does the practice taint the name and reputation of the institution or workplace, but teachers also begin to develop self-doubt and downgrading beliefs of themselves and others. Participant 3 mentioned:

Of course, as a teacher, it can degrade other teachers and me. RQ2_P3_IDI3

Such practice elicits feelings and thoughts about being belittled, and their efforts and hard work are questioned.

Can it affect you in a way that you do not like anymore? It can demotivate teachers who are trying. Another is that they seem to have tricked you. And there is a battle to lose competent teachers. RQ2_P9_FGD1

Lastly, politics in the workplace appears to imply a battle to remove capable teachers from leadership roles and promote them to higher organizational positions.

Emotionally and Mentally Affected. Politics that deter fair promotional systems of schools also elicit emotional and mental stressors for teachers. Participant 1 explicitly mentioned that:

I was emotionally and mentally affected, but I handled myself pretty well. I overcame my emotions by watching inspirational and motivational speeches over the internet and came to thinking logically that I would move forward. RQ2_P1_IDI1

For female teachers, it affects their dignity as though their gender is being attacked. Participant 6 said:

It will, of course, affect us negatively, especially female teachers like me. If this is true for all, it greatly impacts our dignity. We are all born equal and should have fair treatment of any gender." RQ2_P6_FGD1

Meanwhile, based on the experience of participant 10, teachers' self-esteem and morale also become low because of this practice. They said:

It had affected my self-esteem, obviously; my morale got low. Even others may fall victim to what happened to me. RQ2_P10_FGD1

Politics' impact on the promotion system and its victims also influences teachers' personal lives. It somehow extends beyond their professional pursuits, incorporating self-concepts and thought processes that harm their effectiveness as people and employees.

Insights of Teachers on Politics in the Promotional System of their Schools

Presented in this section are teachers' insights on the politics in the promotional system in their workplace. This answered the third research question of our study, 3. *What insights can secondary school teachers share based on their experiences in politics in the promotional system of their schools?* Two major themes emerged from the participants' responses: *Reforms and Active participation*, including *Changing the Promotional System* and *Welfare of Teachers* as sub-themes. Moreover, the *Professional and Personal Development* results revealed two sub-themes for this section: *Professional Growth* and *Perseverance*.

Reforms and Active Participation

Based on the findings, it was revealed that teachers aim to proceed with enforcing peers to speak and fight for their rights. To recognize and make a move to change and reshape the promotional systems that failed to protect their rights and the failure of the organization to protect them. From the participants' responses, sub-themes of this overarching theme include *Changing the Promotional System* and *the Welfare of Teachers*.

Changing the Promotional System. Teachers shared that this politics in the promotional system of institutions must be changed. Others hope that teachers get along with the system and that someday this is reduced for the government and novice employees. Participant 1 stated:

Let us go with it, and I am hoping that in the near future, this unfair system of promotion will be less for the sake of our government and fairness to our new employees. RQ3_P1_IDI1

This would suggest that today's teachers would rather face the experience with the hope that the system will change for the next generation of leaders. On the other hand, to change this system, institutions must follow the established protocols by the government itself. Fair, honest and truthful competition. Through this, teachers could get the desired promotion because they are qualified for the position. Participant 2 mentioned:

I want to be promoted fairly, based on requirements provided by civil service. So, I want a clean competition, a positive competition. So, I want to be promoted because I am qualified. RQ3_P2_IDI2

The same was said by participant 5:

As far as promotion is concerned, see to it that the criteria, the credential, must be followed as far as the requirements of the law in promoting teachers. RQ3_P5_IDI5

There are requirements for promotions that must be followed, as indicated by the school leaders. Results revealed that teachers believe that to reform the system of injustice and politics, school-promoting systems must closely stick to basic directives and laws that control employee rights.

Welfare of the Teachers. After recognizing the manifestation of politics in the promotional system of their workplace, teachers shared that this would be the time for employees to fight for their rights without fear. This is bringing forward the welfare of teachers by fighting for what is correct. Fighting against this practice does not need to be aggressively done. Participant 4 suggested:

Maybe the next time you apply for promotion, if it still happens, you can ask nicely, in a nice manner, why he was chosen, you can ask on. RQ3_P4_IDI4

Participant 8 shared their insights and stated:

Well, the lesson I learned from this experience is that the world is not for the weak. You got the fight for your right and never stopped trying. Do not hesitate to fight for your rights, and do not be afraid. RQ3_P8_FGD1

Teachers learned that the world is full of hardships, and people must be strong enough to face them, including unfairness in the workplace. Meanwhile, others see that to fight means you obtain all the requirements and documents in applying for a promotion, for you to have someday the means to prove your points and fight with factual evidence to abdicate the practice. This was suggested by participant 7, who said:

A lot of insights can be shared in this experience. First of all, fight and do what is right, then complete all the documents needed so that you will be qualified in the near future, and in case there is an anomaly, you can fight back. RQ8_P7_FGD1

After recognizing the manifestation of politics in the workplace's promotion system, the results revealed that it was time for employees to fight for their rights without fear. It promotes teachers' well-being by speaking up for what is correct. Teachers can fight back by communicating and engaging in civil dialogue.

Professional and Personal Development

Results revealed two sub-themes for this section: *Professional Growth* and *Perseverance*. This will be discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

Professional Growth. Results also showed that teachers suggest that peers and colleagues who experience the practice must not only be promoted because of the salary. Promotions are meant to indicate an employee's growth in skills, knowledge, and organizational standing. However, using politics to reach and attain it does not mean professional growth is attained. Hence, teachers suggest that growth in character and professionalism must be nurtured instead of aiming simply for bigger monetary compensations from the institution. Through this, the quality of service for children is improved. During the IDI, participant 4 said:

So not only do we aim to increase our salary, but we also aim to provide good quality education to children. You grow professionally as well as your character grows. RQ3_P4_IDI4

In addition, teachers share that they never give up; instead, they effectively use their time to attain professional growth. Your ambitions to get promotions could be attained along with hard work and prayer. This was highlighted by participant 9 during the FGD, who said:

My insight is never to give up and use your time to improve yourself further. Work hard and pray to God only that you will get your ambition. RQ3_P9_FGD1

Along with the aim to grow professionally, close-minded individuals who practice nepotism and their connections to be promoted will step on to others. However, teachers that fight with them are a part of the process for growth, as participant 6 said:

My insight, ma'am, is that there are still close-minded people who would try to push you down. Nevertheless, never let them step on you. It is just that you can grow as an individual and professionally. RQ3_P6_FGD1

Professional advancement is not limited by organizational position or monetary pay. Professional development for real people is achieved by seeking to better one's character and skills without stepping on others.

Perseverance. Politics in the workplace is not uncommon, and teachers recognize its presence; hence they shared that people who take advantage of their connections are ever-present, and one should only allow them to suffer the consequences of their actions. While genuine individuals can strive to keep moving until success is attained. Participant 3 asserted:

My insight is that; these kinds of people will always lurk in the shadows. Let them suffer from their own mistakes and lies. Just move forward, strive harder and obtain your success.”
RQ3_P7_FGD1

The same insight was shared by participant 10:

My insight is that we have to be patient. If time is yours, it is yours by God's grace. Do not take it to heart. Try and try. RQ3_P10_FGD1

Teachers should persevere and be patient, see the experience from a distance, and not take it to heart. Meanwhile, others suggest that people should go with the flow of the events, and at least now you know about the practice of favoritism. Participant 6 said:

Go with the flow, at least now you know that favoritism is practiced. RQ3_P6_FGD1

According to the findings, perseverance is the key to achieving goals without using power or the assistance of relatives or friends in higher positions. Teachers' perseverance insights represent their strong will and individual fortitude to pursue their true goals as teachers rather than conformity or detachment from experience.

DISCUSSION

Lived Experiences on the Politics in the Promotional system in Public Schools

Findings on teachers' lived experiences of politics in the promotional system included four themes. The four themes were *Voluminous Requirements, Nepotism/ Padrino System, Unjust Selection, and Gender Discrimination.*

Voluminous requirements. The results revealed that surmounting requirements that must be compiled in the absence of politics in complying with requirements for promotion is a lot for a disadvantaged teacher. Unfortunately, this is common for teachers who grow older as they are stressed out by the list to get the promotion they believe they deserve.

Moreover, it will improve employee morale and job satisfaction with a constructive and fair evaluation, and neglecting those factors will lead to negative results (Rubel, & Kee, 2015), which in turn may create difficulty in the retention of employees in each company. However, this supports the fact that processes on promotional systems are long and take time, induced by the politicking behaviors of those involved. This supports that some retire without completing the requirements (Reyes, 2015). Also, this would suggest that the negative effects of erroneous acts of dishonesty in an organization may endanger employees' future (Butcher, 2020).

Nepotism/ Padrino system. Others' perceptions of others' promotions are influenced by how they view their peers and the jobs they have been appointed to. Others believe that the system of higher-ups with any relationship to lower-wage workers is fundamentally prejudiced since they utilize their influence to aid people who are closest to their emotive qualities. As a result, nepotism and the Padrino system effects are two of the most prominent ways politics affect teachers' promotions.

This cloaked patronage tarnishes the state's legitimacy, intensifies the power of particular interests, dilutes the essence of governing structures, and obstructs the impact of social policy (Radiamoda, 2018). Hence, the prevalence of nepotism in the workplace and the Padrino system disrupt the government's order, indicating that personal biases and leaders' matters overshadow the government's goals and aims. The findings are congruent with the study by Bryant (2019).

Unjust Selection. The results of the study are supported by Yamsuan (2017), who previously indicated with evidence that the correct method of recruiting or advancing educators is not appropriately followed among many schools. DepEd's political support framework will detour progressively hiring people in favorable positions for ones with better political associations. This not only obstructs the people from exercising their rights but also hinders the state from giving them what they deserve; according to Radiamoda (2018), however, it amplifies the subjective and biased outlook of school leaders that may explain the unjust promotions. Furthermore, employees from various businesses exposed to workplace politics have a poor opinion of organizational policy, which has a detrimental impact on both work and organizational involvement. Relevant personality traits also impact levels of interaction and moderator function (Jain & Ansari, 2018; Basar et. al., 2018).

Gender Discrimination. This is supported by the study of Byrne et. al. (2017), who indicated that men predominantly occupy senior roles and are most favored in promotions. In this context, political acts deliberately showed racism and sexism in terms of the promotional system (Sadiq et. al., 2019). Put another way, workplace politics should be expected as long as employees have diverse personalities, needs, and desires (Jain & Ansari; Basar et. al., 2018). Intentional, self-serving (albeit often indirect) acts that are typically incompatible with the organization's aims are among the behaviors that result from this (Fatima et. al., 2020). This should explain the inputs of school heads who prefer to hire and promote men compared to women.

Effects of the Experience on the Teachers

After analyzing the data gathered, the themes and core ideas that answered the study's second research question, 2. How do these live experiences affect secondary school teachers? Two overarching themes emerged with their respective sub-themes: *Favorable Effects* and sub-themes: *New Found Motivation*; and *Positivity*. Then the *Unfavorable Effects* included the sub-themes; *Abuse of Power*; *Degraded*, and *Emotionally and mentally affected*.

Favorable Effects. In the course of the prevalence of politics in the promotional system of learning institutions, employees also experienced its favorable effects. Despite the challenging experiences and psychological and emotional damage it inflicts on the teachers, they developed mechanisms to persevere and strive in their career paths, both as employees and as individuals amid the storm of malpractice. The oppression and malpractice can lead people to react and develop a way to psychologically and emotionally bounce back against adversities by developing coping mechanisms (Orchard & Wan, 2019), which transcend to their closest associates.

Newfound Motivations. Results revealed that politics in the promotional system of schools has allowed teachers to find a new motivation to exercise their rights and to be more motivated in doing their goals. This may indicate that other teachers may see the experience as an opener and somehow aided them to cope and see this as a way to see the unjust practice. The result is supported by Byrne et. al. (2017), who found that employees appraise positive and negative organizational politics perceptions as either challenge or hindrance stressors. In this case, teachers saw the politics in the workplace as a challenge, and they later considered this motivation to continue their journey towards reapplying for promotions and improving their professionalism.

Positivity. Based on the study's findings, teachers believe they know what affects them and what does not. They regard the experience as a manifestation that trains them to become better persons who see the situation's light and use it to their advantage. Further, the results are congruent with the findings of Byrne et. al. (2017), who mentioned that teachers struggle with the detrimental effects of political attitudes by disengagement, resulting in positive well-being. Meanwhile, according to Kane-Frieder et. al. (2014), politicking could be seen as a positive and favorable element in a workplace. This would indicate the possible explanation behind developing the positivity of teachers, their positive outlook on their work environment, and the perception of the events that take place within their organization (Orchard & Wan, 2019).

Unfavorable Effects. Teachers' belief in their capacity is also affected by others feeling utterly degraded and disregarded by their organization in favor of their opportunist peers (Villanueva & Cruz, 2019). Meanwhile, others succumb to abuse of their power to kindle feelings of oppression and power over others. Additionally, effects on psychological and emotional well-being are also apparent to teachers. Based on the findings, it was revealed that teachers' lived experiences with the prevalence of politics in the promotional system of the learning institution have unfavorable effects. Accordingly, it discovered three sub-themes: *Abuse of Power*, *Degraded*, and *Emotionally and mentally affected*.

Abuse of Power. After analyzing the study transcripts, it was found that abuse of power by peers and colleagues is unjust and disappointing, and consequential it could someday be reflected in the school or organization's reputation. However, abuse of power is the nature of politics in the workplace (Butcher, 2020; Reyes, 2020). Moreover, Tronqued (2020) did mention that officers and higher officials of the education system were set idle. This would imply that the reason behind the prevalence of the practice is the fact garnered in the study that supports public servants that offer servitude to disguised patronages. In addition to that, customary purposes are veiled to cater to efforts by the school as well. However, because of those that exploit the power associated with their organizational positions—schools remain objects of political strategies and unfairness (Recio, 2019).

Degraded. Politics in the workplace seems to mean to make a competition to remove competent teachers from leading and gaining positions in higher organizational positions. Consequently, teachers are feeling demotivated and degraded teachers as they have playfully clowned over them. Moreover, teachers' thoughts on politicking strategies as stressful are not new, nor is their response to it. Congruent to the study of Byrne et. al. (2017), workplace politics are stressors that demotivate employees.

Also, this is unfavorable for teachers because it results in demotivated employees or workers that may affect the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization in offering their service to their consumers and target receivers (Chamorro-Premuzic, & Bhaduri, 2017). Anchoring on this, the participants of this study are teachers, which would indicate that unfavorable experiences of teachers in their workplace may become evident in the quality of service they offer to the students. Ultimately, individual demotivated teachers and feelings of degradation may one day be reflected in teachers' performance and the learnings acquired by students in the long term. Disguised patronage of leaders and activities within the education system may someday disrupt educational policies (Radiamoda, 2018).

Emotionally and Mentally Affected. The effects of politics on the promotional system and its victims also affect teachers' personal lives. Somehow, it transcends their professional endeavors—involving self-concepts and the thought processes detrimental to their efficacy as persons and employees. The study's findings were congruent with Wang et. al. (2019), who indicated that intentional neglect and inequity in the workplace could cause degradation of the psychological health of the oppressed.

Further, the unjust process of choosing participants is perceived as oppression imposed on teachers. Particularly with the Padrino system, less fortunate teachers are emotionally and psychologically affected by the experience (Bryant, 2019). This harms a person's well-being (Wang et. al., 2019). Congruent to this, Kane-Frieder et al (2014) mentioned that when employees perceive politics in the workplace, this will be perceived as mainly a stressor.

Insights of Teachers on Politics in the Promotional System of their Schools

Reforms and Active Participation. Based on the findings, it was revealed that teachers aim to proceed with enforcing peers to speak and fight for their rights. To recognize and make a move to change and reshape the promotional systems that failed to protect their rights and the failure of the organization to protect them. From the participants' responses, sub-themes of this overarching theme include *Changing the Promotional System* and the *Welfare of Teachers*.

More likely, reforms will aim to reshape the groups which aim to collude the education system with opportunists and power-driven groups that may disrupt fairness in the promotional system of schools (Villanueva & Cruz, 2019). Somehow, the results are reflected in the goals of

the less fortunate employees, which are highly beneficial to the overall performance of an organization. Similarly, Tolentino (2016) highlighted that there are external factors that contribute to politics in the workplace. Hence, efforts done by organizations in response to the insights of teachers may well handle such problems.

Changing the Promotional System. There are criteria for promotions, as stated by the school heads must lean on this. Somehow, clients are suggesting that to change the system of unfairness and politics, promotional systems of schools must adhere strictly to initial mandates and laws that govern the right of employees. This implies that schools, due to the presence of politics that cause unfairness in assigning organizational positions, are not currently adhering to the mandates of the government, indicating that something is amiss in the current promotional system (Villanueva & Cruz, 2019). Similarly, this form of conformity to the government to change is congruent to a study that revealed that conformity is when a teacher believes that those in power authority are best capable of interpreting situations. According to Zhu et. al. (2018), conformity is a reactive tactic that refers to compromises teachers make to protect themselves and survive. This allows them to focus on technical aspects and not on subjective matters (Chaudhry et. al., 2016).

Welfare of the Teachers. Results revealed that it was time for employees to fight for their rights without fear after identifying the manifestation of politics in their workplace's promotion system. This is about advancing the well-being of teachers by standing up for what is correct. Teachers may fight back by talking and opening discourse nicely. If others seek to settle the concern right away, teachers suggest that they speak carefully for them to be heard, to be listened to, and to possibly understand in ways that other candidates are chosen and not them. Teachers are the most significant asset in the education system for any general public (Taransenko, 2020).

Further, fights meant to protect the rights of teachers may not need to indicate large protests or actions that may disrupt the organization's activities. For others, it is most favorable to directly address small indications of malpractice professionally and courteously. Incongruent with the study of Byrne et. al. (2017), instead of an emotion-focused mechanism and disengagement or cutting off their ties with the organization, secondary school teachers believe that it is better to face it. This is apparent from the previously cited statements in this section. This is the suggested point that Chaudhry et. al. (2016) saw as the favorite way for teachers to respond to their emotions, remain objective, and see the technical aspects of their experiences.

Professional and Personal Development. The study's findings revealed that teachers also reflected in their actions and found ways to foster individual growth amid the unfavorable experiences associated with politics in the promotional system. In the process, teachers have understood the nature of their experiences, their roots, and their possible effects on their journey as persons and professionals. Moreover, teachers are susceptible to undue burden and accountability for the consequences of their actions (Chahkandi et. al., 2016). Such instances could be seen as an opportunity for learning and a chance to re-discover oneself, their beliefs, and their actions. Congruent to Byrne et al (2017), teachers are equipped with the capacity to have positive well-being if they begin to see the stressors associated with their work positively. Such positive actions are evident in the previous statements and section of this paper, which discussed the favorable effects of politics in the promotional system to the teachers.

Professional Growth. Professional growth transcends organizational position and monetary compensation. For genuine individuals, professional growth is attained by improving character and skills without stepping onto others. The practice of politics in the workplace is a manifestation of unprofessionalism because of unfairness and the Anak-anakan system (Bryant, 2019). Despite its common practice, teachers should aim to improve themselves rather than become like those seeking a higher salary promotion.

Perseverance. The findings indicate perseverance is the key to attaining goals without needing the power and help of relatives or friends from higher positions. The teachers' insights on

perseverance reflect their strong will and individual strength to pursue their genuine mission as teachers, not conformity nor detaching themselves from experience (Byrne et. al., 2017; Zhu et. al., 2018). Teachers are the most significant asset in the education system for any general public (Taransenko, 2020). Hence, it is important to consider the actions that follow after emotional outbursts and psychological burnout. While others try to leave as a reactive response to unfortunate events (Szczepańska-Woszczyna, 2015), others may seek to objectively see their situations and address them more professionally (Chaudhry et. al., 2016).

III. CONCLUSION

To explore and unravel teachers' lived experiences on the politics of the promotional system of schools, I used in-depth interviews and focus group discussions on gathering data from teachers in five public secondary schools in Davao Del Sur. This section presented the overall findings and conclusions on politics in the promotional system of learning institutions and the learnings that I have gathered in the process.

Based on the results, teachers' experiences of the presence of politics in the workplace revolved around two major themes: disenchantment, apathy, and emotional and psychological stress. It revealed that the manifestation of nepotism and Padrino systems are among the common cases experienced by teachers in their workplaces. Also, teachers experience stress due to discrimination. Thus, the manifestation of politics in the promotional system of teachers derails organizational opportunities for less fortunate teachers. As a professional teacher who only seeks to improve my quality of teaching and create better opportunities for our young generations, this enlightened me on the possibility that the consequences of such actions towards my peers would be projected onto the students. It alarmed me that my co-teachers, some of whom have kept the experience to themselves, must be overwhelmed.

Moreover, findings also revealed that teachers are affected by their experiences either favorably or unfavorably. They develop coping mechanisms that allow them to cope with the challenges associated with their experiences in their workplace. While others become drained mentally and psychologically, while others succumb to the experience and resort to abuse of power. The teachers' experience motivates them to strive for professional growth and aim for success without strings attached from the higher authorities or school leaders. Hence, workplace politics bring forth teachers' ability to individually and professionally handle their situations. I know that my peers are strong enough to overcome challenges at work but face professional and psychologically challenging situations.

In contrast, they face their students daily reminds me of why teachers are among the most resilient beings in the world. From the experiences they have shared, I have come to know that teachers are lifelong learners. Teaching is both a passion and skill that transcends our lives and how we live and lead our lives.

Additionally, teachers shared their insights on the matter as well. Among the insights shared, they indicated that the system itself must be changed. And one way to do this is to follow mandates and laws issued by the government to protect employees and offer fair and just promotional opportunities for teachers. This, I believe, is the purpose of this study, to further understand the phenomenon of politics in the promotional system, help my peers, and ultimately reduce and delimit malpractice in the educational system for a better and healthier workplace for teachers, even for myself.

In conclusion, politics in the promotional system is detrimental to the professional quality of leaders and the motivation of teachers to apply and further their careers in their respective workplaces (Jain, & Ansari, 2015; Rubel & Kee, 2015). This system affects not only the organization but also the quality of services offered to the students (Taransenko, 2020; Radiamoda, 2018). In the long run, a lack of competent organizational leaders may become detrimental to the quality of education for students. Thus, we start by crafting appropriate interventions for those working behind closed doors to create good, fair, and just future leaders.

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