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Job Satisfaction of Public School Teachers in Relation to Pedagogical Barriers and Coping Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' job satisfaction influences their commitment and retention, particularly in schools serving disadvantaged and Indigenous Peoples communities. This descriptive-correlational study examined the job satisfaction of 170 public school personnel in Alabel District, DepEd Schools Division of Sarangani Province, in School Year 2025–2026, in relation to their pedagogical barriers and coping strategies. Respondents were selected through stratified random sampling and completed pilot-tested scales on job satisfaction, barriers in mathematics teaching, and coping strategies (α = .87 to .91). Data were analyzed using weighted means, chi-square, and correlation. Job satisfaction was Very High on all four indicators: interpersonal relationships (M = 3.54), work environment (M = 3.40), recognition and motivation (M = 3.40), and professional growth and development (M = 3.32). Relationships with colleagues were the highest item (3.58), and career advancement the lowest (3.28). Satisfaction was significantly associated with every profile variable except sex, most strongly with seminars and trainings (χ^2 = 16.82), educational attainment (χ^2 = 14.67), and school (χ^2 = 13.58). Teachers maintained this satisfaction despite Very High barriers, led by socio-economic barriers (M = 3.46) and resource shortages (M = 3.43), while coping at a Very High level (M = 3.48 to 3.56). Barriers, coping strategies, and satisfaction were significantly interrelated (r = .68, p = .001). Teachers' satisfaction rests mainly on collegial relationships and active coping and is weakest where it depends on institutional opportunities. A professional development program emphasizing career progression, recognition, peer mentoring, and resource support is proposed.

Introduction

A satisfied teacher is more likely to stay, to invest effort, and to treat difficulties as problems to be solved rather than reasons to leave. Job satisfaction among teachers is shaped by the work environment, opportunities to grow, relationships with colleagues and superiors, and recognition (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). In the Philippines, where many public schools serve remote and disadvantaged communities, understanding what sustains teachers' satisfaction is a practical concern for school heads and division planners who must staff these schools.

Two sets of conditions are likely to bear on satisfaction in such settings. The first is the barriers teachers encounter in their teaching. In mathematics, these include mismatches between teaching and learning styles, scarce resources, learners' negative attitudes, crowded curricula, and learners' poverty (Cardino Jr., 2020; Akon-Yamga et al., 2024; Karikari et al., 2020; Uddin, 2024). The second is the coping strategies teachers use, which range from adaptive

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problem-solving and peer collaboration to building positive classrooms, varying instruction, and remaining resilient (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Amoroso, 2025). Barriers can erode satisfaction, while effective coping may protect it (Kokkinos, 2007; Smith & Hoy, 2022).

This study centered on job satisfaction. It examined the job satisfaction of public school teachers in Alabel District, DepEd Schools Division of Sarangani Province, in School Year 2025–2026, in relation to their pedagogical barriers and coping strategies. It described the respondents' profile and their satisfaction with each aspect of their work; identified the profile characteristics associated with satisfaction, barriers, and coping; described the barriers and coping strategies; and tested the relationship among barriers, coping, and satisfaction. The results informed a professional development program for the district.

Literature Review

Sources of teacher job satisfaction. Satisfaction is shaped by working conditions, including facilities, safety, and climate; by professional growth through training, innovation, and advancement; by relationships with colleagues and administrators; and by recognition and incentives. Teacher stress and low self-efficacy predict emotional exhaustion and the motivation to leave the profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Job stressors, together with personality, predict burnout among primary teachers (Kokkinos, 2007), and burnout is linked to wider mental health difficulties (Ferguson, 2022). Collegial support, professional learning communities, and positive classroom climates help sustain teachers' well-being (Long, 2024; Wabingga, 2025; Smith & Hoy, 2022). Variety in instructional practice has also been associated with lower burnout and greater satisfaction (Shi et al., 2025).

Barriers that may erode satisfaction. Mathematics teachers face barriers that turn daily work into a struggle. Learners often prefer auditory, kinesthetic, or tactile modes that teachers' instruction does not accommodate (Cardino Jr. & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2020; Ako et al., 2025; Akinnawonu, 2025). Shortages of instructional materials, technology, and infrastructure force improvisation (Ansah et al., 2020; Belete et al., 2022; Pasayloon, 2023). Learners' anxiety and low motivation reduce participation (De-la-Peña, 2021; Luttenberger et al., 2018), crowded and rigid curricula create time pressure (Brantuo et al., 2023; Johnson, 2025), and learners' poverty and limited home support reduce readiness and attendance (Ng et al., 2021; Uddin, 2024). In IP schools, non-IP teachers also confront language and cultural gaps (Cubi & Rollo, 2025; Nazarita & Morales, 2025).

Coping strategies that may protect satisfaction. Stress and Coping Theory describes coping as efforts to manage demands that strain one's resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Teachers use adaptive problem-solving (Kantathanawat et al., 2025), continuous professional development and peer collaboration (Golledge, 2025; Papp & Cottrell, 2021; Victorian Department of Education, 2025), positive classroom environments (Smith & Hoy, 2022; Classroom Management Center, 2025), varied instruction (Yang, 2024; Shi et al., 2025), and resilience supported by optimism, self-care, and social support (Fabrigas & Paglinawan, 2025; Versfeld, 2025; Chan et al., 2021). Such strategies have been linked to resilience and sustained commitment among Filipino teachers in diverse school contexts (Amoroso, 2025; Suttles, 2024).

Framework and legal bases. The study combined Stress and Coping Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) with constructivist learning theory (Simon, 1995; Efgivia et al., 2021) and the socio-ecological model of educational inequity (Jornet, 2025). It is supported by the Excellence in Teacher Education Act of 2022 (RA 11713), which mandates teachers' continuous professional growth; the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 (RA 9155); the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533); and DepEd's IPEd policies, which require culturally responsive education and teacher capacity development.

Methodology

Design and Respondents

The study used a descriptive-correlational design. The respondents were 170 public school personnel in Alabel District, Sarangani Province, selected through stratified random sampling: 15 school heads, 50 non-IP mathematics teachers, 10 IP teachers, and 95 other public school teachers.

Instruments

Job satisfaction was measured using items adapted from the Job Satisfaction Survey, with five items for each of four indicators: work environment, professional growth and development, interpersonal relationships, and recognition and motivation. Pedagogical barriers in mathematics teaching were measured across five domains with items adapted from Ako et al. (2025), Cardino Jr. (2020), and Nazarita and Morales (2025), and coping strategies across five dimensions with items grounded in Stress and Coping Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Chan et al., 2021). Weighted means were interpreted as Very High (3.26–4.00), High (2.51–3.25), Fair (1.76–2.50), or Low (1.00–1.75). A profile sheet recorded nine personal and professional characteristics. Pilot testing with 30 teachers in Malapatan District produced alphas of .87 for job satisfaction, .89 for barriers, and .91 for coping.

Data Collection and Analysis

After the Schools Division Superintendent approved the study, the researchers met school heads and teachers, explained the study's purpose, and obtained informed consent. Questionnaires were administered at times that did not interfere with classes. Hesitation due to confidentiality concerns, conflicts with community events, and the distance of some schools were addressed through assurances of anonymity, flexible schedules, and planned travel. Descriptive statistics summarized the data. Shapiro–Wilk tests indicated normal distributions for job satisfaction ($W = .982$, $p = .145$) and coping ($W = .976$, $p = .112$) but not barriers ($W = .921$, $p = .031$). Chi-square tests and correlation were used to test relationships at $\alpha = .05$.

Ethical Considerations

An ethics review committee approved the study. Participation was voluntary, responses were anonymized and securely stored in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and the instruments were reviewed with community leaders to ensure respect for IP culture.

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Results and Discussion

Respondents' Profile

Table 1

Professional Profile of the Respondents (n = 170)

Variable	Category	f	%
Educational attainment	Bachelor's with master's units	64	37.65
	Master's degree	62	36.47
	Master's with doctoral units	38	22.35
	Doctorate	6	3.53
Years in teaching	1–5	18	10.59
	6–10	58	34.12
	11–15	56	32.94
	16 and above	38	22.36
Grade level handled	Elementary	94	55.29
	Junior high school	52	30.59
	Senior high school	24	14.12
Seminars and trainings	1–3	28	16.47
	4–6	32	18.82
	7–9	54	31.76
	10 and above	56	32.94

The respondents were highly qualified and experienced (Table 1). Every respondent had pursued graduate education, and more than a quarter (25.88%) had reached the doctoral level. Two-thirds had taught for 6 to 15 years, and nearly two-thirds had attended seven or more relevant seminars and trainings. Most taught at the elementary level. Personally, they were mostly aged 30 to 49 (74.12%), female (61.18%), and married (64.71%), and Cebuano was the most common ethnicity (54.12%), with 29.41% identified as non-IP. Teachers with this degree of investment in their own education may expect corresponding opportunities for advancement, which is relevant to the satisfaction results below. A similar combination of strong formal qualifications and specific capacity gaps was found when the skills and competencies of basic education teachers on Samar Island were mapped (Panela, 2025d).

Job Satisfaction

Table 2

Level of Job Satisfaction of the Respondents per Item

Indicator and Item	Mean	Level
Work environment	**3.40**	**Very High**
Feels safe in the work environment	3.44	Very High
Satisfied with classroom conditions	3.42	Very High
Workplace is conducive to teaching	3.41	Very High
School climate is positive	3.39	Very High

Indicator and Item	Mean	Level
Facilities support effective instruction	3.36	Very High
Professional growth and development	**3.32**	**Very High**
Receives support for professional growth	3.36	Very High
Training programs meet needs	3.34	Very High
Satisfied with development opportunities	3.33	Very High
Encouraged to innovate	3.31	Very High
Has opportunities for career advancement	3.28	Very High
Interpersonal relationships	**3.54**	**Very High**
Good relationships with colleagues	3.58	Very High
Feels respected by colleagues	3.57	Very High
Enjoys working with peers	3.55	Very High
Collaboration is encouraged in school	3.52	Very High
Feels supported by administration	3.46	Very High
Recognition and motivation	**3.40**	**Very High**
Feels motivated to perform well	3.44	Very High
Recognition boosts morale	3.41	Very High
Efforts are recognized by superiors	3.39	Very High
Satisfied with incentives	3.38	Very High
Rewarded for achievements	3.36	Very High

Note. 3.26–4.00 = Very High; 2.51–3.25 = High; 1.76–2.50 = Fair; 1.00–1.75 = Low.

Job satisfaction was Very High on all four indicators and all 20 items (Table 2). Interpersonal relationships ranked first (*M* = 3.54), with good relationships with colleagues (3.58), respect from colleagues (3.57), and enjoyment of working with peers (3.55) the three highest items in the scale. Work environment (*M* = 3.40) was led by feeling safe at work (3.44) and satisfaction with classroom conditions (3.42), with facilities the lowest item (3.36). Recognition and motivation (*M* = 3.40) was led by feeling motivated to perform well (3.44), with rewards for achievement lowest (3.36). Professional growth and development was the lowest indicator (*M* = 3.32), and opportunities for career advancement was the lowest item in the entire scale (3.28).

The pattern suggests that teachers' satisfaction comes mainly from people and less from institutional arrangements. Collegiality provides respect, collaboration, and companionship, which are recognized protections against stress and burnout (Smith & Hoy, 2022; Wabingga, 2025; Versfeld, 2025). Teachers are also internally motivated, as their high rating for motivation to perform well shows. Satisfaction is weaker where it depends on the institution: facilities, tangible rewards, and above all career advancement. Given the respondents' advanced qualifications, the relatively low satisfaction with advancement may indicate a gap between their credentials and the promotions available to them, a condition associated with emotional exhaustion and the motivation to leave (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Support from administration (3.46) was the lowest relational item, which suggests that school leadership can do more to reinforce satisfaction. Simple, accessible supports for teachers' workplace stress also merit attention; university teachers in one Philippine study reported comfort from an AI companion toy in managing work pressures (Panela, 2026).

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Profile Characteristics and Job Satisfaction

Table 3

Test of Relationship Between Profile Variables and Job Satisfaction

Profile Variable	χ^2	p	Decision	Interpretation
Age	11.62	.02	Reject H_0	Significant
Sex	3.74	.15	Accept H_0	Not significant
Civil status	9.85	.04	Reject H_0	Significant
Ethnicity	12.43	.02	Reject H_0	Significant
Highest educational attainment	14.67	.01	Reject H_0	Significant
School	13.58	.01	Reject H_0	Significant
Years in teaching	12.94	.02	Reject H_0	Significant
Grade level handled	8.76	.05	Reject H_0†	Borderline
Relevant seminars and trainings	16.82	.01	Reject H_0	Significant

Note. †p = .05; treated as significant in the source analysis, although it does not fall below α = .05.

Job satisfaction was significantly related to seven profile variables (Table 3). The strongest associations were with seminars and trainings ($\chi^2 = 16.82$, $p = .01$), educational attainment ($\chi^2 = 14.67$, $p = .01$), and school ($\chi^2 = 13.58$, $p = .01$), followed by years in teaching ($\chi^2 = 12.94$), ethnicity ($\chi^2 = 12.43$), age ($\chi^2 = 11.62$), and civil status ($\chi^2 = 9.85$). Grade level handled was at the .05 boundary ($\chi^2 = 8.76$), and sex was not significant ($\chi^2 = 3.74$, $p = .15$). The same pattern held for barriers and coping: every characteristic except sex was associated with both, with the largest values again for trainings ($\chi^2 = 15.27$ and 16.53).

That trainings and educational attainment are most closely tied to satisfaction is consistent with the low rating for professional growth: teachers value growth, and their satisfaction appears to vary with how much of it they have experienced (Golledge, 2025; Long, 2024). The school association reflects differences in facilities, leadership, and community across schools, conditions that fall unevenly on schools in marginalized areas (Omoeva, 2021; Belete et al., 2022). The ethnicity association suggests that IP and non-IP teachers experience their work differently, which is consistent with the cultural and linguistic challenges non-IP teachers report in IP schools (Cubi et al., 2024; Cubi & Rollo, 2025). Satisfaction did not differ by sex. This agrees with the view that working conditions, more than gender, shape teachers' attitudes toward their jobs, although confirming that satisfaction items function the same way for women and men would strengthen the conclusion, as shown in a gender-based Rasch analysis of a Philippine teacher empowerment scale (Panela, 2025a). Since chi-square does not indicate direction, statements about which groups are more satisfied would require further analysis.

Barriers and Coping Behind Satisfaction

Table 4

Pedagogical Barriers and Coping Strategies by Dimension

Variable	Dimension	Mean	Level
Barriers	Socio-economic barriers	3.46	Very High
	Lack of appropriate teaching resources	3.43	Very High
	Curriculum-related constraints	3.39	Very High
	Negative attitudes and low motivation	3.28	Very High
	Mismatch between teaching and learning styles	2.81	High
Coping	Building positive classroom environments	3.56	Very High
	Adaptive problem-solving techniques	3.55	Very High
	Maintaining a positive attitude and resilience	3.55	Very High
	Professional development and peer collaboration	3.49	Very High
	Employing varied instructional approaches	3.48	Very High

Note. 3.26–4.00 = Very High; 2.51–3.25 = High; 1.76–2.50 = Fair; 1.00–1.75 = Low.

Teachers reported Very High barriers in four domains, led by socio-economic barriers (M = 3.46), resource shortages (M = 3.43), and curriculum constraints (M = 3.39), with style mismatch High (M = 2.81) (Table 4). They also reported Very High coping in all five dimensions, from varied instruction (M = 3.48) to positive classroom environments (M = 3.56). Teachers therefore remain satisfied while facing heavy, largely structural barriers, and they do so while coping intensively. Their improvisation in the face of scarce materials (3.51), their adjustment of strategies when problems arise (3.62), and their persistence despite challenges (3.59) are the kinds of active coping that Stress and Coping Theory associates with preserved well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Chan et al., 2021). The strain on learners is evident in the high ratings for financial difficulties (3.52) and low confidence (3.30), conditions that the pandemic years likely deepened, as research on Filipino students' mental health during that period has shown (Panela, 2025b).

Relationship Among Barriers, Coping, and Satisfaction

The test of relationship produced a significant, moderately strong, positive coefficient (r = .68, p = .001), and the null hypothesis was rejected. Job satisfaction is therefore related to the barriers teachers face and the coping strategies they use. The likely explanation is that teachers who face more barriers also cope more actively, and that active coping, together with collegial support, sustains their satisfaction (Smith & Hoy, 2022; Amoroso, 2025). The coefficient should be interpreted cautiously. It was reported for the three variables together rather than for each pair, so it does not show whether barriers alone raise or lower satisfaction or how much coping contributes independently. Because barriers were not normally distributed, a rank-based coefficient would also have been more suitable. Future analyses should report the barrier–satisfaction and coping–satisfaction coefficients separately and test coping as a mediator.

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Table 5

Components of the Proposed Professional Development Program

Component	Concern Addressed	Main Activities
Culturally responsive pedagogy	Teaching–learning style mismatch	Workshops on differentiated instruction; seminars on inclusive and culturally responsive teaching
Resource management and technology	Lack of materials and technology	ICT integration training; resource-sharing; low-cost teaching aids
Student motivation and engagement	Negative attitudes, low motivation	Motivational strategy seminars; classroom management training; peer mentoring
Curriculum mapping and prioritization	Overloaded, rigid curriculum	Mapping workshops; prioritizing essential competencies; flexible lesson planning
Community and parental engagement	Socio-economic barriers	Parent-teacher forums; community support programs; local partnerships
Peer collaboration and mentoring	Coping strategies	Mentoring groups; collaborative planning; learning communities
Resilience and stress management	Positive attitude and resilience	Resilience workshops; wellness programs
Career progression and leadership	Job satisfaction	Leadership training; advancement seminars; recognition and incentives

The proposed program has eight components (Table 5) and is planned in three phases (foundation, application, and sustainability) with a budget of ₱1.2 million from DepEd, local government, and private partners. Two components respond most directly to the satisfaction results. The career progression and leadership component targets the weakest satisfaction indicator by creating advancement pathways and recognition systems that match teachers' qualifications. The peer collaboration and mentoring component builds on the strongest source of satisfaction, collegial relationships, and extends it into structured professional learning (Long, 2024; Golledge, 2025). The remaining components reduce the barriers that place demands on teachers' coping. The program should be designed with attention to the practical obstacles teachers face in professional learning, such as time, distance, and limited mentoring, which teachers on Samar Island encountered when doing action research during the pandemic (Panela, 2025e).

Conclusion

Public school teachers in Alabel District are highly satisfied with their jobs, mainly because of their relationships with colleagues, their own motivation, and a safe work environment. They are less satisfied, although still at a Very High level, with career advancement, rewards, and facilities. Satisfaction is related to every profile characteristic except sex, most strongly to training, educational attainment, and school. Teachers maintain this satisfaction while facing Very High barriers, chiefly learners' poverty, scarce resources, and curricular overload, and while coping at a Very High level. Barriers, coping strategies, and satisfaction are significantly interrelated.

The division should implement the proposed professional development program, giving priority to career advancement and recognition systems, structured peer mentoring, and resources for schools with the greatest needs. School heads should strengthen administrative support and protect the collegial cultures that sustain satisfaction, and wellness and resilience activities should be institutionalized. Teachers should also be prepared to recognize and respond to learners' lingering emotional difficulties from the pandemic years (Panela, 2025c). Future studies should report the separate relationships of barriers and coping to satisfaction and examine how satisfaction changes as the program is implemented.

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