

# Challenges in Implementing Effective Guidance and Counseling Programs in the Paquibato District

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**Abstract:** In the heart of Paquibato District, where education meets diverse and often complex student needs, the promise of school guidance and counseling programs faces a stark reality of implementation challenges. This qualitative-phenomenological study sought to understand the lived experiences of the frontline advocates: public elementary school teachers who also serve as guidance coordinators. It aimed to uncover the profound barriers they face and the remarkable resilience they demonstrate in their quest to support students' holistic well-being. Through in-depth interviews with ten teacher-coordinators, the study gave voice to their struggles, identifying three core challenges: profoundly limited resources and infrastructure, a deep-seated cultural stigma surrounding mental health, and the relentless pressure of high workloads and competing priorities. In the face of these obstacles, these educators do not surrender; they innovate. Their coping mechanisms reveal a story of profound dedication: they exhibit immense resourcefulness and creativity, become passionate advocates for awareness, and master the art of time management and prioritization. From their experiences, crucial insights emerge: that building trusting relationships is the first and most important step, that targeted professional development is a non-negotiable need, and that authentic community involvement is the ultimate key to sustainability. This study is a call to action. It underscores the urgent need for the Department of Education and the wider community to unite in providing concrete support, enhanced training, and dedicated resources. By doing so, we can transform these barriers into bridges, ensuring that every child in Paquibato District has access to the guidance and support they need to thrive.

**Keywords:** *Guidance and Counseling, Qualitative-Phenomenological Research, Mental Health Advocacy, Teacher Resilience, Paquibato District, Davao City.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

A child's ability to learn is deeply intertwined with their social and emotional well-being. In the unique and vibrant context of Paquibato District, Davao City, guidance and counseling programs are not a luxury; they are a critical component of a supportive and effective educational environment. These programs are tasked with nurturing resilience, solving conflicts, and providing a safe harbor for students navigating personal challenges.

Yet, the educators championing these vital services often do so against a tide of significant obstacles. This study moves beyond policy to center on the human experience—listening to the stories of public elementary school teachers who have taken on the dual role of educator and guidance coordinator. It seeks to illuminate the specific management barriers that impede the effective implementation of counseling programs in this district. More importantly, it aims to document the ingenious strategies these dedicated

professionals employ to overcome them. By amplifying their voices, this research provides a foundational understanding for creating a more robust, responsive, and effective support system for both students and the teachers who guide them.

## II. METHODS

To truly honor the depth and nuance of this experience, this research adopted a qualitative-phenomenological approach. This methodology is chosen not to generalize, but to understand the essence of the lived reality for those on the front lines. Ten public elementary school teachers serving as guidance coordinators across Paquibato District were purposively selected to share their journeys, ensuring their rich and diverse experiences were captured.

The primary instrument for data collection was the semi-structured, in-depth interview. This method allowed for conversational yet focused dialogue, giving participants the space to reflect openly on their challenges, their coping

strategies, and their hopes for the future. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, a process of immersion in the data to identify, analyze, and report the recurring patterns and profound themes that tell the collective story of their struggle and perseverance.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The teachers' narratives wove a compelling tapestry of challenge and resilience, revealing a reality where dedication consistently outweighs available resources.

#### ➤ *The Analysis Identified Several Profound Barriers:*

- **Inadequate Resources and Infrastructure:** A fundamental lack of dedicated spaces, materials, and time specifically allocated for guidance activities.
- **Cultural Stigma Surrounding Mental Health:** A pervasive societal reluctance to acknowledge psychological and emotional struggles, creating a significant barrier to students and families seeking help.
- **Overwhelming Workloads and Competing Priorities:** The immense pressure of teaching responsibilities often pushes guidance duties to the periphery, making it difficult to provide consistent support.

In response, the teacher-coordinators demonstrated incredible agency and ingenuity. Their coping mechanisms were not just strategies but testaments to their commitment:

- **Resourcefulness and Creativity:** Making the most of what little they have, often using personal materials and inventing low-cost, high-impact activities.
- **Advocacy and Awareness Initiatives:** Courageously working to normalize conversations around mental health, one student, parent, and colleague at a time.
- **Time Management and Prioritization:** Strategically carving out moments in an overcrowded schedule to ensure the most vulnerable students are seen.

Beyond the barriers and coping, their insights chart a path forward. They emphasized that building trusting relationships is the bedrock of any effective intervention. They voiced a critical need for specialized professional development to equip them with the skills for this complex role. And they highlighted that sustainable change is impossible without genuine community involvement and support, breaking down stigma and creating a network of care that extends beyond the school walls.

This discussion underscores a critical conclusion: the challenges are systemic, but the will to overcome them is deeply personal. The current model places an unsustainable burden on teacher-coordinators. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted, systemic response: significant investment in resources, mandatory de-stigmatization

campaigns, a restructuring of workloads to prioritize student well-being, and the development of strong, collaborative partnerships with the community. By acting on these recommendations, we can honor the resilience of these educators and build a system where guidance and counseling are not an added burden, but a core, celebrated function of a nurturing school.

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