



Research Article

EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES OF RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT AMONG PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY

Ben Robert C. Tual¹, Grace G. Tizon¹, Rochelan Lumasag¹, Perlito D. Jomua², Cynthia S. Superable²

²Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines

¹Misamis University, Oroquieta City, Philippines

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*Corresponding Author:

tualbenrobert@deped.gov.ph

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ABSTRACT

Research engagement is crucial for public high school teachers, as it enhances professional growth, improves instructional practices, and contributes to the overall development of the educational community. This study explored the challenges affecting research engagement among public high school teachers in the Misamis Occidental Division, examining the barriers they face, their impact on research participation, and the persistence of these challenges despite existing support programs. Using a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018), data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eight teachers, three school administrators, and three education personnel. Following Yin's (2009) six-phase case study procedure, the study found three emerging themes: barriers to research engagement: time, resources, and support limitations; diminished research engagement: slow progress, reduced motivation, and compromised quality; and limited generalized, inconsistent support undermines research engagement. Enhancing teachers' research engagement requires addressing workload pressures, strengthening institutional support, and providing consistent resources to overcome systemic barriers that limit motivation, continuity, and the quality of scholarly output. Strengthening teachers' research engagement requires the Schools Division Office and school administrators to provide structured, needs-based support, including protected research time, targeted mentoring, continuous training, and regular follow-up, while future studies explore the effectiveness of such programs in enhancing research participation and productivity.

Keywords: barriers, engagement, motivation, research, support, public schools

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Introduction

The role of teachers as researchers has become increasingly important in promoting evidence-based instruction, professional growth, and improved student learning outcomes. Research engagement enables teachers to critically examine classroom practices, develop context-responsive interventions, and contribute to educational innovation. Despite its recognized value, meaningful teacher participation in research remains limited because of numerous personal, institutional, and systemic barriers (Nollett et al., 2024).

Existing literature demonstrates that teachers' research engagement is influenced by a complex interaction of psychological, organizational, and contextual factors. Individual characteristics—including research motivation, attitudes toward research, and research self-efficacy—have consistently been identified as significant determinants of teachers' willingness to conduct scholarly work (Natividad et al., 2024). Likewise, institutional culture, leadership support, workload, and access to research resources substantially shape teachers' research productivity (Kienast, 2023). These interconnected factors suggest that research engagement extends beyond individual competence and reflects the broader educational environment in which teachers operate.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of research self-efficacy as a predictor of sustained research participation. Teachers who possess greater confidence in research design, data analysis, and academic writing are more likely to initiate and complete research projects (Li & Xu, 2024). Conversely, excessive teaching responsibilities, insufficient research training, limited funding, and inadequate mentoring significantly constrain teachers' research productivity (Al Absi et al., 2024). While intrinsic motivations such as professional growth encourage long-term engagement, institutional incentives and organizational support remain essential in sustaining research involvement (Abazie & Guo, 2025).

Within the Philippine public school system, research is strongly encouraged through national educational reforms and professional development initiatives. However, many teachers continue to encounter structural challenges that limit their capacity to undertake research. Although previous investigations have explored teachers' motivation, attitudes, and research self-efficacy, considerably less attention has been given to the institutional conditions that either facilitate or impede research engagement in local school settings. Consequently, there remains limited empirical evidence explaining how organizational support, workload demands, leadership practices, and resource availability collectively influence teachers' research participation.

Addressing this gap is particularly important because institutional conditions often determine whether teachers can translate positive research attitudes into actual research productivity. A deeper understanding of these contextual factors can inform the development of responsive policies and sustainable support systems that strengthen research culture within schools.

Guided by this need, the present qualitative case study explores the barriers and enabling conditions influencing research engagement among public school teachers in Misamis Occidental, Philippines. By examining teachers' lived experiences alongside institutional perspectives, the study seeks to generate context-specific evidence that may guide school leaders, education administrators, and policymakers in designing interventions that foster a sustainable culture of educational research.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative case study design following Yin's (2018) framework to explore the factors influencing research engagement among public school teachers within their real-world educational context. The study was conducted in Aloran District, Division of Misamis Occidental, Philippines. Participants were selected through purposive sampling and included eight public high school teachers, three school administrators, and three education personnel. This participant composition enabled the researchers to examine research engagement from both individual and institutional perspectives. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using interview guides specifically designed for each participant group. Ethical approval was obtained from the Misamis University Ethics Review Board, and all research procedures complied with the provisions of the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012. Participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. Data analysis followed Yin's six-phase case study process, consisting of planning, designing, preparing, collecting, analyzing, and reporting. Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes related to barriers, institutional support, and motivational factors

influencing teachers' research engagement. Measures to ensure trustworthiness included credibility through participant validation, dependability through systematic documentation, and confirmability through audit trails.

Results and Discussions

There were three emerging themes of the study, namely: barriers to research engagement: time, resources, and support limitations; diminished research engagement: slow progress, reduced motivation, and compromised quality; and limited generalized, and inconsistent support undermines research engagement.

Theme 1: Barriers to Research Engagement: Time, Resources, and Support Limitations.

Teachers' research engagement is significantly constrained by persistent time limitations, heavy workloads, and insufficient institutional support, which collectively reduce opportunities for sustained scholarly involvement. Participants consistently reported that extensive teaching responsibilities, administrative demands, and competing professional roles leave little uninterrupted time for research, often relegating it to a secondary priority. Limited access to research training, funding, mentoring, and updated digital resources further intensifies these challenges, reinforcing perceptions of research as burdensome rather than integral to professional practice. These findings align with evidence that excessive workloads and fragmented schedules undermine teachers' research capacity and motivation (Liu et al., 2024; Zhang & Wang, 2023; Mahmood et al., 2025). Interpreted through Social Cognitive Theory, such constraints weaken research self-efficacy and persistence (Bandura, 1986; Li & Xu, 2024), while Organizational Support Theory highlights how inadequate institutional resources and guidance diminish perceived support and engagement (Eisenberger et al., 2025; Bautista, 2024). Together, these perspectives underscore that without protected time, access to resources, and capacity-building support, teachers' ability to participate meaningfully in research remains limited.

Theme 2: Diminished Research Engagement: Slow Progress, Reduced Motivation, and Compromised Quality.

Diminished research engagement among teachers manifests in delayed progress, waning motivation, and compromised research quality, mainly due to interruptions caused by overlapping duties, limited support, and persistent uncertainty. Participants described how fragmented workdays and competing responsibilities disrupt research continuity, leading to stress, loss of momentum, and, in some cases, abandonment of projects. Slow progress and fear of producing substandard outputs further reduce motivation, resulting in sporadic, incomplete, or less rigorous research contributions. These patterns are consistent with studies showing that heavy workloads and lack of protected research time hinder sustained engagement and output quality (Ashour & Hatamleh, 2024; Drury & Crockford, 2025; Abeid et al., 2025). From a Social Cognitive Theory perspective, low confidence and diminished self-efficacy weaken persistence in research tasks (Bandura, 1986; Alyami et al., 2023), suggesting that enhancing motivation, mentoring, and recognition is essential to maintaining momentum and improving both the quality and continuity of teacher-led research.

Theme 3: Limited, Generalized, and Inconsistent Support Undermines Research Engagement.

Limited and inconsistent institutional support substantially undermines teachers' research engagement by failing to provide tailored guidance, sustained mentorship, and adequate resources needed for meaningful participation. Participants, including teachers, school heads, and support personnel, emphasized that existing programs are often generalized, infrequent, and poorly supported, lacking individualized follow-up and practical application. Such systemic and programmatic gaps contribute to ongoing skill deficits, low confidence, and reduced motivation, despite the presence of formal initiatives. These findings align with the broader literature, which indicates that generalized support and inconsistent implementation undermine research participation and productivity (Mahmood et al., 2025; Matheson, 2025; Lee et al., 2024). Organizational Support Theory explains that when perceived institutional support is low due to scarce resources, limited mentoring, and weak follow-through, teachers' commitment to discretionary activities, such as research, declines (Eisenberger et al., 2025; Putra et al., 2024). This highlights the need for structured, well-resourced, and personalized support systems to foster sustained research engagement and strengthen research culture in schools.

Conclusions

Addressing teachers' research engagement requires comprehensive, systematic interventions that simultaneously reduce workload pressures, expand access to research resources, and strengthen institutional support structures. Persistent teaching demands, declining motivation, and inadequate or inconsistent support

collectively undermine teachers' ability to sustain meaningful participation in research, often resulting in fragmented engagement and compromised research quality. Moreover, the absence of targeted, sustained institutional support reinforces systemic barriers that limit the continuity and rigor of teacher-led scholarly work, underscoring the need for coordinated strategies that prioritize research as an integral component of professional practice.

Recommendations

Strengthening teacher research engagement requires implementing structured, sustained, and needs-based institutional support systems at both the school and division levels. Allocating protected research time, providing targeted mentoring, and ensuring continuous access to relevant training and resources can enable teachers to engage actively and consistently in high-quality research while integrating scholarly work into their professional responsibilities. Regular monitoring and follow-up mechanisms are also essential to sustain research initiatives, ensure practical guidance, and promote productivity. At the same time, future studies may further examine the effectiveness of tailored support programs and mentorship models in enhancing research engagement among public high school teachers.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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