



Challenges Faced by the Public Elementary School Teachers in Conducting Action Research

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Abstract: Many teachers in the Department of Education (DepEd), both elementary and secondary schools, continue to be uninterested in conducting action research despite the DepEd's efforts to update and inform the public-school teachers of the importance of doing research. Furthermore, the said teachers also have a deficiency in their practical knowledge, resources, and skills in conducting action research. The shortcomings of these teachers need to be addressed because they are integral to resolving classroom issues and improving teaching skills leading to the better academic performance of learners. Therefore, this study explored the challenges faced by the public school teachers of Talisayan District, Division of Misamis Oriental in conducting action research during the school year 2020-2021. It focused on the following action research processes that teachers undergo in the conduct of action research such as selecting a focus/problem identification; clarifying theories; identifying research questions; collecting data; and analyzing data. The challenges encountered by the teachers were also identified as the basis for crafting the offered recommendations. The qualitative phenomenological method of research was used in the study. There were 16 participants who were purposively chosen. The semi-structured interview guide questions were utilized as the data-gathering tool. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Generally, findings revealed that the teacher participants experienced the following in conducting their action research namely: struggling during the initial stage, the feeling of rejection, the complexity of demands, constraints with set priorities, difficulties in recognizing relevant theories, inadequate background knowledge on theories, lack of skills in the formulation of objectives, demonstrating low-spiritedness, lack of methods and techniques, falling short of pre-notification process, and inadequate skills in data analysis.

Keywords: Challenges Faced, Conducting Action Research, Phenomenological Method

1. Introduction

Teachers encounter a lot of issues and problems in daily teaching activities in the classrooms. Some teachers strive to find a solution by acquiring suggestions and recommendations from their colleagues. Good teachers conduct their studies on systematic inquiry in finding solutions to problems and analyzing information about classrooms while also developing their professional competence. Action research allows teachers to learn about themselves, their students, and their colleagues. It also helps them to determine and continually improve their teaching and learning processes. It also enhances the teacher's teaching

skills and increases students' performance [15].

Several studies were conducted on the importance of action research in education and its impact on instruction quality [23]. For instance, teachers' engagement in action research has boosted their self-confidence in teaching, developed competency on various academic topics, and showed greater motivation to teach [5]. Moreover, it helped them cater to and address their students' needs. Reflecting on the results of their studies has also widened their perspective on their classroom teaching style and strategies [5, 16, 6]. Consequently, they gained a sense of responsibility and accountability to improve and develop their instruction [24].

In Philippine schools, conducting action research has become one of the significant concerns in professional

development for teachers. The Department of Education (DepEd) encourages teachers to conduct school-based action research as an inclusion to their performance appraisal. Similarly, in higher educational institutions, teachers are directed to perform better in classroom teaching and publishing academic papers because of the "publish or perish" mentality. Therefore, aside from daily instructions, conducting research has become a part of their functions in their respective institutions.

The DepEd has issued an order to adopt the enclosed Basic Education Research Agenda. It encourages education research in the country [12]. It aims to identify concerns and problems in the teaching and learning process and provide interventions based on the results and findings. As stipulated in their Individual Teachers' Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF), teachers are required to do action research as a part of their annual performance appraisal. It is under the key result areas on professional growth and development, which is five percent of the individual teachers' evaluation score. However, the lack of necessary knowledge on doing action research among teachers in Philippine public elementary and secondary schools may limit its popularity.

Many teachers in elementary and secondary schools continue to be uninterested in conducting action research despite the DepEd's efforts to update and inform the public-school teachers of the importance of doing research. A few reasons they remain uninterested are tight teaching timetables and heavy teaching workloads [24, 22]. Hence, only the teachers who have ample research knowledge engage in it [4].

Thus, this study aimed to illustrate the teachers' experiences in engaging and conducting action research. The significance is for the school heads, policymakers, and school officials to consider this study's findings and address the teachers' needs to create a community of highly adept teacher-researchers.

1.1. Framework of the Study

This study is anchored on the concept that action research is based on the understanding that teachers will learn from studying their practices more effectively compared to learning through other forms of research. Additionally, it expresses that teachers engage in workplace and research practice at the same time by working reflectively and analytically. Action research in the educational context always aims to improve teaching practice [21].

This study is supported by the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 (RA 9155), which directs the DepEd to enact policies and mechanisms that improve the delivery of quality basic education ceaselessly through educational research. It will serve as one of the bases for necessary reforms and policy development.

DepEd Order [10] sets a systematic policy development process that advances evidence-based policy formulation supported by research studies in the department. Providing financial aid to the conduct of research in the field, it [11, 5] sets policies on the use of the Basic Education Research Fund (BERF). To prioritize these research initiatives, the DepEd

order [12] publicizes the Basic Education Research Agenda, making the department's research priorities known.

Regardless of the scenario, action research always follows the seven-step process [30]. These seven steps, which become an endless cycle for the inquiring teacher, are as follows:

The first step in the process is selecting a focus: a serious reflection directed towards determining a topic or topics deserving of a busy teacher's time. Considering the incredible demands of today's classroom teachers, studies are only worth doing if the results make the central part of a teacher's work more successful and satisfying. Thus, selecting a focus is especially important.

Next is clarifying theories involving identifying the values, beliefs, and theoretical perspectives the researchers hold for their focus. In research, the researchers' values, beliefs, and theoretical perspectives are important factors since they can influence the study's design, implementation, and interpretation. These factors can shape the research questions, guide the selection of methods, and influence the interpretation of the findings.

Then, identifying research questions: generating a set of personally meaningful research queries to guide the inquiry. The prerequisite is selecting an area and clarifying the researcher's perspectives and beliefs about that focus.

Next is the collection of data. Teachers are asked open questions at available times for developing reliable and valid instruments for data collection. Before implementing the plan of action, the source of data must be identified as results or other indicators, and the best methodologies for collecting information for gathering more accurate, meaningful, and reliable data.

The final step is data analysis. It often forwards the use of complex, statistical calculations. Several relatively user-friendly methods help a practitioner determine the trends and patterns in the data. In this portion of the seven-step process, teacher researchers will methodically sort, sift, rank, and examine their data. Examining the data during the collection process helps the researcher better their action plan.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted to describe the challenges faced by the public elementary school teachers of Talisayan District, Division of Misamis Oriental in conducting action research in 2020 – 2021. Specifically, it aimed to explore the challenges public elementary school teachers faced in the following processes: selecting a focus/problem identification; clarifying theories; identifying research questions; collecting data; and analyzing data.

1.3. Legal Bases in Conducting Action Research

The Department of Education is required by the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 (RA 9155) to implement plans and procedures that continuously enhance the provision of high-quality basic education. The conduct of educational research and studies, which will serve as one of

the foundations for necessary reforms and policy development, is included in Chapter 1, Section 7 (5), along with the responsibilities of DepEd across all levels of governance.

DepEd has implemented research and its use in policy and program development to encourage an environment where decisions are based on solid evidence. The DepEd order [10] also established a methodical process for developing policies that advance the formulation of evidence-based policies supported by research studies carried out within the department; by providing funding for the conduct of field research, the DepEd orders [11, 5] established guidelines for the use of the Basic Education Research Fund (BERF). It provides a detailed plan for putting a grant-awarding facility into action.

The Basic Education Research Agenda was also made public by the DepEd order [12], which detailed the department's top research priorities in the areas of teaching and learning, child protection, human resource development, and governance. Gender and development, disaster risk reduction and management, and inclusive education are additional cross-cutting themes. Then, through the release of the Research Management Guidelines, a framework for the management of research initiatives at all levels of governance is created [9] to assist in the management of research initiatives at the national, regional, schools division, and school levels as well as improving various research-related mechanisms, such as funding, partnerships, and capacity building. The guidelines provide a mechanism for the conduct of basic research and action research.

1.4. Concept and Definitions of Action Research

Action research is a form of systematic, reflective inquiry that can improve teaching strategies or deal with problems in any operating unit, including the office, classroom, or school [9]. Teachers find action research to be an empowering experience. One of the more critical positives of action research is that it helps educators effectively teach and develop their students [30].

Action research steps are varied. According to authors [13], action research is a dynamic, adaptable process, and there is no set "how" to carry it out. Therefore, it is impossible to say that one researcher or the other is correct in their specific action research steps. Occasionally researchers' opinions modify the number of steps in action research.

1.5. Challenges Faced by Teachers in Conducting Action Research

Action research is an essential activity: it incites changes and improvements in the teaching-learning process. However, it is within the expectation that teachers experience many difficulties as they go through the action research process. The different processes where challenges may arise while engaging in action research are identifying a research problem, clarifying theories, identifying research questions, collecting data, and analyzing data. These are significant in

affecting teacher researchers in schools.

According to the author [27], identifying and formulating problems is essential before conducting research. It is one of the most challenging aspects of research. The author [6] also added that identifying an initial idea is one of the several facets teachers need further awareness of and training. The author [28] also stated that if one is not interested in a topic, one will not be able to do it in the best possible manner.

According to the author [18], establishing the research question is an addendum to researchers' difficulties in the initial stages of action research. It also supports the author's study [4], which found that few teachers were involved in research because they lacked the necessary research skills.

Different research results also reported that teachers also experience apprehensions in submitting research proposals for fear of rejection. That sense of rejection negatively affects the teacher-researchers' interest, confidence, and motivation to start research activities. The author [19] said that it is 'disheartening' when your paper gets rejected by a journal. Similarly, it reinforces the author's claim [14] that manuscript rejection is a disappointing experience, especially when repeated several times.

Another primary issue in conducting action research is teachers lacking time. Teachers have little time and energy left for research because of the demanding nature of the job. As a separate work, research demands time, energy, and commitment from individuals engaged in it. According to the author [8], time pressure due to teaching and administrative workload, lack of teacher professional development standards, inadequate support systems, lack of commitment on the teacher educators' part, lack of adequate resources, inadequate awareness about action research, and inadequate incentives available for teacher researchers are the most severe constraints faced by teacher researchers when undertaking action research properly.

Similarly, the teachers stated they did not have the opportunity to conduct research because most of their time was spent in classroom instruction, marking papers, and planning lessons. They stated that if their teaching load was reduced, they might be compelled to conduct research. The author [13] pointed out that conducting research adds to teachers' workloads. These teachers cannot prioritize research if their schedules are not adjusted because their primary duty is classroom teaching.

Furthermore, the author [13] claimed that teachers were prevented from conducting high-quality research due to time constraints related to classroom teaching and research. This implies that teacher-researchers should be given quality time to complete the tasks they are expected to complete as they compromise with priorities in their workplace, family, and society. In this way, they can be expected to produce high-quality work.

It takes effort to evaluate relevant theories. It necessitates in-depth learning and reading. So, a precise understanding of what "theory" means is necessary to develop and assess scientific knowledge and its worth [32]. However, assessing the most applicable theories is effortful and time-consuming.

According to the teacher researchers, research is an additional task to their already significant volumes of work. They believe it may negatively affect their teaching performance and interfere with their personal lives [1].

Similarly, the author [31] noted that understanding and selecting an acceptable theory is one of the most important basic elements in any research undertaking. Theoretical frameworks influence the interpretation, setting, and discussion of the entire study, not just the design.

In another vein, data collection is crucial to the research process [29]. Data collection enhances the quality of a research study when implemented correctly. According to the author [20], a lack of knowledge, experience, and skills to do qualitative research can hinder the transmission of information or the improvement of the original knowledge in understanding the phenomenon under study. Due to their lack of training or expertise in qualitative research, new researchers may not feel comfortable conducting qualitative interviews [17].

There are also instances wherein respondents are not willing to participate fully in the data collection process, and researchers have to make an extra effort to convince them. According to the author [17], inexperienced researchers may struggle to build rapport with subjects and may run into subjects unwilling to participate in the interview. The author [33] claimed that finding people who will participate in the research is one of the research bottlenecks. Similarly, recruiting participants for qualitative research is often the study's most challenging and resource-intensive facet [2].

Another challenge teachers often struggle with is analysis rooted in their lack of skills and knowledge. Respondents do not have the knowledge or capability to run in-depth data analysis, which is especially true for those without formal training. The author [25] claimed that the lack of in-depth knowledge of action research practices might prevent teachers from implementing the methodology because they do not understand nor possess the required skills. According to the author [26], teachers tend to be unclear about action research. It also supports the study that one factor that is found challenging is skill related. Hence, teachers find research difficult and lack knowledge about its processes [1].

Teachers readily admitted that they lacked the necessary research skills and knowledge to conduct their studies. The author [34] emphasized that attending research workshops will positively impact teacher researchers. Thus, these teachers must be exposed to research training, seminars, and conferences, to develop more of their skills and confidently conduct a research project of their own.

Consequently, the author [34] emphasized that participating in research seminars, symposiums, and courses will benefit the researchers by exposing them to various approaches, styles, and research concepts. Hence, research seminars and training should be made available to all of these teachers so they can develop the skills and information essential to do research [34]. It is also said that many teachers need help collecting data. The study may imply that teacher-researchers must possess the required skills and knowledge

of data-collection strategies and techniques.

The literature and studies reviewed and cited provided the researcher with a better context and insights regarding the present study. The researcher was equipped with valuable data and ideas that guided her research. It helped the researcher in the conceptualization of the study. Further, it gave her a clear understanding of the diverse challenges faced by public elementary school teachers. Finally, the studies cited confirmed and negated the present study's findings. To sum up, even though experiences are classified differently according to different authors, they negatively affect the involvement of teachers in the conduct of action research in the context where they are working.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Locale

The study employed the qualitative phenomenological research method to explore the experiences of conducting action research. It was conducted in the Talisayan District of the Division of Misamis Oriental. The Division has conducted an annual "Call for Research Congress" to improve governance mechanisms and create evidenced-based policy procedures and guidelines formulation/ enhancement, program development, and replication of research-enabled practices. Every district has conducted research competitions and presentations to help teachers refine their skills and competence in research. The District Supervisor organized and invited resource speakers for a seminar entitled "District Seminar-Workshop on Action Research." However, despite the district's initiative to update and inform the teachers of the importance of action research, many were uninterested and unmotivated.

2.2. Participants of the Study

The 16 participants of the study were purposively chosen public elementary school teachers in Talisayan District, Division of Misamis Oriental, during the school year 2020-2021. Specifically, the study includes the eight (8) teacher-participants who actively conducted action research, presented, and participated in their research congress held in the Division and eight (8) non-active ones.

2.3. Data Gathering Tools

The researcher used the semi-structured interview guide questions as a data-gathering tool, which helped the researcher gather in-depth information on the challenges public elementary school teachers face in conducting action research. The panel of experts validated it to ensure they captured significant statements from the participants. The researcher sometimes used additional follow-up or probing questions to clarify or expand the participants' responses.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

A letter of approval to conduct the study from the Schools

Division Superintendent, Division of Misamis Oriental, was secured by the researcher. The approved letter request was furnished to the district supervisor and presented to the school principals of the participating schools. The researcher personally conducted the interviews with the participants and followed the ethical processes. It was done in a place conducive for the participants to freely express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences about their challenges in conducting action research.

2.5. Data Analysis

The six (6) steps of the data analysis technique for qualitative research were followed: (1) organizing and preparing the data for analysis; (2) reading or looking at all the data; (3) starting coding all of the data; (4) using the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis; (5) advancing how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative; and (6) making an interpretation in qualitative research of the findings or results [7].

2.6. Ethical Considerations

Participants were duly informed that their participation was voluntary and that all the information obtained from the study would be treated with the utmost confidentiality. They were assured that their responses were for research purposes and that their identities would be kept confidential.

3. Results and Discussion

Challenges Faced by Public Elementary School Teachers in Conducting Action Research.

3.1. On Selecting a Focus / Problem Identification Process

Most of the teacher participants expressed many difficult experiences when they went through the first step of the process in action research, which is selecting a focus/problem. Based on the participants' responses, four (4) themes emerged: *struggling during the initial stage*, *a feeling of rejection*, *and the complexity of the demands and constraints with set policies*.

One of the emergent themes transcribed in the study is teacher-participants having difficulty doing action research since they struggle during the initial stage. Specifically, they struggle at the start of their research with the study's conceptualization, including selecting a research topic and a title. In this respect, it was found that identifying the research problem is one of the processes that the participants have difficulty with, like how to start the study, deciding the topic for research, and creating the title.

As cited in the participants' experiences, one of the most challenging research tasks involves the initial and formative phases. It supports the author's findings [27] that problem formulation and identification are essential for the researcher before conducting research. Moreover, it is one of the

toughest parts of any research project. It is also in line with the author's findings [6], which claim that, among other things, teachers need more education and awareness in the area of identifying an initial idea.

In addition, the theme of "feeling of rejection" indicates that the teacher-researchers are afraid of the non-acceptance of the proposed research. The result further suggests that the participants are anxious that their paper may be rejected because there are other existing and even more relevant topics—or when faced with a vast and unlimited number of subjects. Specifically, some teacher-researchers are so apprehensive about submitting a research proposal for fear of rejection. As the author [19] mentioned, it is disheartening when a paper gets rejected by a journal or a research committee. Similarly, it correlates to the claim that manuscript rejection is a disappointing experience, especially when repeated several times [14].

Moreover, the "complexity of the demands" emerged as one of the prevailing themes in selecting a focus/problem identification. The participants shared their worries in this regard. They revealed that many factors need to be considered, like time management and availability of resources. They added that conducting action research requires time, effort, patience, and money. Most participants stressed that their primary issue and challenge in conducting action research is their lack of time. Given the demanding nature of their job and workload, teachers have little time and energy left for research. Specifically, research work demands additional time, energy, and commitment from teacher-researchers.

The study's results confirmed the most significant obstacles teachers face in properly conducting action research in their respective fields. These are teaching and administrative workload, lack of teacher professional development standards, inadequate support systems, lack of commitment to the teachers' lack of adequate resources, inadequate awareness about action research, and inadequate incentives available for teacher researchers as the most severe constraints that faced the teacher educators with undertaking action research in their study areas properly [8].

In addition, the theme "constraints with set policies" also emerged. The participants encountered difficulty in problem identification because of the set policies where the school had already assigned research topics; they had no choice but to accept the topics assigned to them. It was added that it is challenging to undertake a study when the topic idea prepared does not coincide with their interests.

This situation complements the author's [28] determination that if you are not interested in a topic, you will not be able to conduct research in the best possible manner. Even professionals and researchers at advanced levels research subjects they are curious about. They do not take any random questions and start research on it. Interest in a topic means added motivation: one will happily work on it and have a better result.

3.2. On Clarifying Theories Process

Two (2) themes emerged based on the participants' responses. These are *difficulties in recognizing relevant theories* and *inadequate background on theories*. The first theme transcribed from teachers' responses on their experiences with clarifying theories is that they have difficulty recognizing relevant theories. This means that the teacher-researchers need extensive learning and reading to evaluate the appropriate theories for their study. Assessing the most applicable theories also consumes so much time and effort.

In the interview, the teacher-participants shared: since many theories are available online, expanded reading, assessing, and evaluating appropriate theories are needed to develop suitable theories that best support their study. They also mentioned that it is effortful to look for theories that are fitted to the appropriate concept. In addition, some teacher-participants also revealed that finding theories needs further reading and depletes ample time.

This supports the finding from the study that time is the main obstacle to teachers conducting research. They claim that conducting research takes time and adds to the already considerable work of teachers [1]. They believe it negatively affects their teaching performance and interferes with their personal lives. Many theories are present online. The internet has become one of the essential tools and provides many beneficial opportunities to find various resources. The use of internet has become a trend globally because for its easy access to many resources and information [3]. However, the problem lies in choosing the appropriate theory for their study. Furthermore, a clear understanding of what 'theory' means is also required in developing and evaluating scientific knowledge and its value [32].

Likewise, the "inadequacy of background knowledge on theories" emerged as one of the themes. This theme shows how the teacher-participants felt difficulty in clarifying theories due to unfamiliarity with most of them. The participants mentioned that it is challenging because not all the theories are familiar. As observed, teacher-participants have difficulty clarifying theories since they do not have sufficient background knowledge. The author [31], who observed that understanding and selecting a suitable theory is one of the most important foundational steps in any research project, supports this claim. Theoretical frameworks influence the interpretation, setting, and discussion of the entire study, not just the design.

3.3. On Identifying Research Questions Process

Based on the challenges of the teacher-participants, as they identified research questions, the themes of *lack of skills in formulating objectives* and *demonstrating low-spiritedness* emerged. In these themes, the teacher-participants shared that they have insufficient knowledge to link-up variables with the purpose of the study. They further revealed their inadequacy in statistical and technical skills for the treatment and analysis of data applicable to the purpose of the study.

Some participants also mentioned that they went through several revisions to formulate well-defined, relevant, and significant research questions. The participants' responses indicated that the lack of knowledge to formulate well-defined, relevant, and important research questions contributed to their difficulties in identifying research questions. These confirmed the author's claim [18] that formulating the research question is a challenge researchers face in the early stages of action research. It also complements the author's study [4] that only a few teachers conduct research due to the lack of adequate research knowledge. It was also revealed that the number of training, seminars, and workshops regarding research is insufficient.

Some participants revealed a diminished interest in research due to several factors that must be considered before coming up with the research problems. Examples of these factors are the need to attend more training and seminars about conducting action research, the cost of doing it, availability of time for the preparation of papers, persons involved in the research, availability of data, methods, and the cooperation of colleagues and stakeholders. Some participants further revealed their lack of motivation to identify research questions in their case because of over-studied scopes.

In the interview, the responses of the participants on their experiences in identifying research questions are almost similar: they face difficulties undertaking the process because of various factors, which include the availability of time and resources, the cost of doing the research, which methods to use and even the need to attend more training and seminars. All these factors make the teacher-participant less eager to continue their research. A lack of training would undoubtedly affect the teachers' interest, confidence, and motivation in research-related activities.

The author [34] mentioned that participating in research seminars, symposiums, and courses positively affects researchers because it exposes them to various research methodologies, styles, and concepts. Consequently, all these teachers should have access to research training and seminars to help them learn the skills they need. Teachers cannot complete the task successfully if they lack the necessary skills [35].

3.4. On Collecting Data Process

Three (3) themes emerged from the experiences of public elementary school teachers in Collecting Data: lack of methods and techniques, falling short of the pre-notification process, and time constraints due to multitasks.

The participants admitted that they lacked self-directed methods and techniques for conducting research. This emerged as one of the prevalent themes. The process of collecting data exerts a degree of difficulty on the participants. The source of the problem may hinge on the lack of skills in data collection strategies and techniques. It was further added that they encountered difficulty in crafting questionnaires to be used in data gathering.

As shared by other participants, they need to have their

questionnaires checked and validated by some experts to come up with consistent and accurate data. Further, they also experienced difficulty collecting data because they were not trained. It is demonstrated in the interview that many teachers experience difficulties collecting data. The results clarify that these teacher-researchers do not yet possess the required skills and knowledge of data collection strategies and techniques. Data collection is critical to the research process [29]. When implemented correctly, data collection enhances the quality of a social research study. This is supported by the authors' [20] study stating that the lack of knowledge, experience and skills to do qualitative research can hinder information of the original knowledge and can even muddle the phenomenon under study. A novice researcher may not feel confident conducting qualitative interviews equipped with limited or zero experience in qualitative research [17].

Moreover, the participants experienced falling short of the pre-notification process. This appeared as one of the themes in this area. The teacher-participants shared that some of their research respondents are not taking the process seriously. Some questionnaires were not adequately answered, making them anxious about the data's consistency and relevance. Moreover, all these may be attributed to their inability to orient the participants to the true intent of the study.

It was also mentioned by some teacher-participants that there were respondents who were unwilling to participate and unavailable for the interview in the data collection process. As a result, the researchers had to exert extra effort to convince them. As observed, the ability and willingness of the parties to participate in the study are crucial to the consistency and integrity of the data gathered. They added that some instruments were not returned. Hence, they needed additional effort to communicate and follow up with the respondents to retrieve the questionnaires successfully.

The participants also experienced time constraints due mainly to the multiplicity of their teacher tasks. This was made evident by the participants sharing similar responses. Some participants conceded that they were too busy with their teaching practices to have enough time to gather data. Others claimed they did not have time for research because they spent lots of time instructing, marking papers, and planning lessons in the classroom. They specifically hoped that if their teaching load were lightened, they would be motivated to conduct research.

It is a common observation that novice researchers encounter participants who resist taking part in interviews and have difficulty establishing rapport [17]. This was also evident from what the teacher-participants revealed as a problem. Finding the right participants for research is difficult and time-consuming. This conforms to the author's [33] thesis that finding people who will participate in research is one of the research bottlenecks. Similarly, participant recruitment for qualitative research is a resource-intensive aspect of a study and is often the most challenging [2].

In a related manner, the author [13] recognized that teachers' workloads are increased by their involvement in research. Since classroom teaching is their primary duty,

these teachers will not prioritize research if their schedules are not relaxed. They added that the teachers' inability to produce high-quality research studies was impeded by time constraints related to conducting research and teaching in the classroom. A substantial teaching load was also mentioned as the main disincentive to teachers participating in research.

3.5. On Analyzing Data Process

The theme that largely emerged from the challenges experienced by the teachers in the process of analyzing data was the *inadequacy of data-analyzing skills*. They struggle with and are unsure what appropriate statistical tools could be used to analyze the data gathered.

As mentioned especially by one of the teacher-participants, they struggled with data analysis because of skill inadequacy. One participant added that since it is difficult, they need help from a skilled professional to analyze data. Another participant mentioned that they also faced difficulty with making statements. They resorted to asking for help from their colleagues, sometimes even from the school head. The participants further added that they also sought help from a statistician, a knowledgeable person, or an expert in a given field to ensure their paper was on the right track and conformed to acceptable scholarly standards.

It was indicated from the participants' responses that the teachers struggled greatly with data analysis due to their lack of skills and training. The participants do not have the knowledge or capability to run in-depth data analysis. This is especially true for those without formal training. This conforms to the findings of the author [25], who reported that a lack of in-depth knowledge of action research practices might prevent teachers from implementing the methodology because they do not possess the required skills. According to the author [26], teachers tend to be unclear about action research. These also go along with the author's study [1] that one factor that is found chiefly challenging is skill related. This means that teachers find research difficult and do not have enough knowledge about its processes and finer nuances.

In this study, teacher-researchers admitted that they lacked the necessary research skills and knowledge to conduct their studies. The author [34] emphasized that attending research workshops will positively impact teachers conducting a research study. Thus, these teachers need to be exposed to research training, seminars, and conferences, to develop more of their skills and to conduct a research project on their own confidently.

4. Conclusion

The teacher-participants faced various challenges in conducting action research since they were mandated to formulate research addressing different teaching and learning issues in the classroom. Thus, they felt apprehension because of the various factors to consider. They also felt inadequate because of their personal and professional limitations in research. In addition, the process is demanding for them

because they encounter challenges like the lack of research knowledge, skills, time, support from their schools, and heavy teaching loads.

In light of the results, the division and district research coordinators may take measures to solve the hindering factors teachers encounter in conducting action research and search the means of providing in-service training, workshops, and seminars for a concrete and complete development of skills.

School heads may encourage and support teachers by providing incentives such as recognizing role models and providing opportunities to participate in research conferences to present their research activities. They may also promote teachers and establish research committee members to improve their involvement in conducting action research.

The teachers may take personal initiative to manage their time better and effectively to endure the overloaded task of the teaching profession and undertake action research. Furthermore, teachers may have an external consultant or teachers with experience in research to guide them along every step of the research process.

Further recommendations include finding other mechanisms to be adopted by the schools, such as the emphasis on participatory and collaborative action research, support for more professional development programs, peer mentoring and advising, and others that may be formalized and institutionalized.

For future researchers, similar or further studies may be conducted on exploring teacher-researchers' experiences in another context.

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