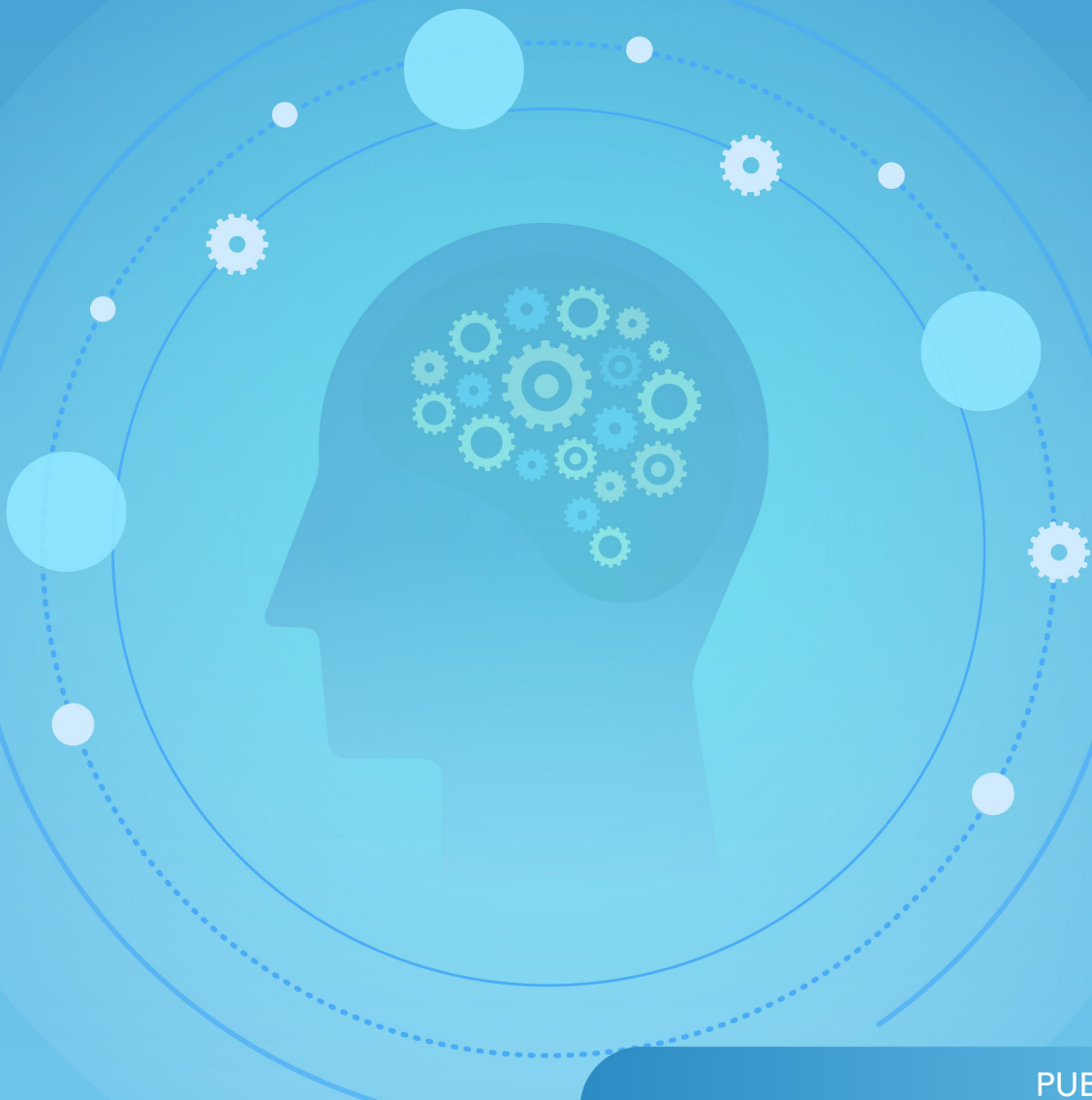




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Unrecognized Leadership: The Lifeworld of Unpromoted Teachers Serving as Teacher-in-Charge

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ABSTRACT

The role of Teachers-in-Charge (TICs) within the Philippine Education System, particularly in the BARMM region, represents a crucial yet often overlooked aspect of school leadership. Despite assuming significant responsibilities, including managing school operations and supporting teachers, TICs face substantial challenges due to their lack of formal recognition and authority. This study explores the lived experiences, challenges, and aspirations of unpromoted TICs within the Philippine education system, with a particular focus on the BARMM region. TICs, who perform leadership roles without formal recognition or promotion, are a critical part of the school management structure but often face systemic challenges that hinder their professional growth. Through transcendental phenomenology, including in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, this study identifies key areas that TICs encounter, including emotional strain, role ambiguity, workload pressures, and a lack of formal authority. The findings reveal that despite the absence of official leadership positions, TICs exhibit remarkable resilience and growth, viewing their roles as opportunities for personal development and leadership advancement. However, these teachers also experience significant role discomfort, as their responsibilities often exceed their formal rank, undermining their confidence and limiting their decision-making power.

The study further highlights the leadership ambitions of TICs, many of whom view their current roles as stepping stones toward formal promotion. Nevertheless, the lack of recognition, both at the institutional level and within the broader educational system, remains a substantial barrier to their career progression. This research also underscores the structural challenges that perpetuate the invisibility of TICs' contributions, particularly the focus on formal credentials or research outputs in promotion systems, which disadvantages those with practical leadership experience.

The findings suggest the need for systemic reforms to address the rank-role misalignment experienced by TICs. Recommendations include creating clearer leadership pathways, professional development programs, and institutional recognition to better support TICs in realizing their leadership potential. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on teacher leadership in the Philippines and calls for enhanced policies to empower TICs and formally integrate them into school leadership structures.

INTRODUCTION

The role of Teachers-in-Charge (TICs) within the Philippine Education System is a pivotal yet often disregarded component of school leadership. While school heads or principals are traditionally responsible for overseeing the management and instructional quality of schools, TICs, who are usually unpromoted teachers, step into leadership roles that encompass a broad range of duties, from administrative tasks to fostering a positive learning environment.

Globally, schools likewise rely on teacher leaders to perform leadership functions beyond teaching, often within informal or distributed arrangements where responsibilities are not always matched by formal authority, role clarity, or promotion (Harris *et al.*, 2022; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; Schott *et al.*, 2020). In the Philippines, schools are required to have a designated school head and are guided by formal leadership standards. Yet, leadership responsibilities often shift to teachers serving in acting roles when school head items are unavailable particularly in remote and under-resourced areas such as BARMM (Department of Education, 2020; Bello, 2023; Hungo *et*

al., 2023).

Despite their contributions, Teachers-in-Charge often perform principal-like responsibilities without equivalent authority, recognition, compensation, or structured support, which can create role ambiguity, emotional strain, and constrained decision-making. However, there remains limited lifeworld-focused evidence particularly in BARMM clarifying how TICs experience this rank-role misalignment, navigate leadership expectations aligned with school head standards, and sustain school operations in contexts where formal school head items are unavailable, despite distributed leadership realities (Bello, 2023; Hungo *et al.*, 2023; Arnido & Vibal, 2025; Rosales *et al.*, 2023; Harris *et al.*, 2022). The study is to explore the lived experiences, views, and challenges of TICs in Sultan sa Barongis District, Maguindanao del Sur, BARMM, and to shed light on the systemic gaps that limit their leadership practice and professional growth.

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Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of unpromoted teachers serving as TICs?

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2. How do TICs describe the context of their experiences?
3. How do TICs view themselves in the future?

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the essential aspects of life today is having a profession. Many individuals strive to complete their education and earn a degree to secure stable career opportunities. A career refers to a person's occupation or profession, which serves as a means of livelihood and provides the resources necessary for daily living.

In every institution, there are individuals responsible for managing its human resources. These individuals, commonly known as Human Resource and Management Officers, ensure that employees are able to perform effectively and contribute to the overall success of the organization. Their primary responsibility is to maximize the potential of the workforce and ensure that the institution develops competent and efficient personnel.

In the field of education, schools are primarily governed by a school principal. The principal plays a vital role in leadership, teacher evaluation, and the overall management of teachers and learners. School principals ensure the quality of education provided by the institution by directing and supervising teaching and learning processes. As leaders and managers, they oversee the efficient functioning of the school and ensure that all members of the institution perform their responsibilities effectively.

The Republic Act No. 9155 mandates that every public elementary and secondary school in the Philippines must have a school head. The law also encourages the establishment of integrated schools through the consolidation of existing public elementary and high schools. According to this act, the school head serves both as an instructional leader and an administrative manager. With the assistance of teachers, learning facilitators, and non-teaching personnel, the school head is responsible for implementing quality educational programs, projects, and services.

Within the Philippine education system, a growing phenomenon involves teachers serving as teachers-in-charge (TIC) without receiving formal promotion to the position of school head. Several recent studies have examined this situation and revealed the complex nature of this unrecognized leadership role.

The structural environment in which TICs operate is largely shaped by policy frameworks and professional standards established by educational authorities. In the Philippines, the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads outlines the competencies expected from school heads across five domains: strategic leadership, school operations, teaching and learning, developing self and others, and building connections. However, teachers serving as TICs often perform leadership responsibilities without formal inclusion in professional development programs aligned with these domains (Bello, 2023; Ortiz, 2025).

Career stagnation further complicates this situation due

to promotion systems that prioritize formal credentials or research achievements. Simbre *et al.* (2023) reported that school principals often consider postgraduate degrees and research output as essential criteria for promotion. Consequently, teachers whose strengths primarily lie in classroom practice may face disadvantages in career advancement. In addition, reports published by The Philippine Star highlight that many teachers remain in the same rank for years despite meeting the qualifications for promotion because of limited Plantilla positions and quota restrictions within the system.

Arnido and Vibal (2025) conducted a hermeneutical phenomenological study in Bago City that explored the experiences of teachers serving as TICs. Their findings revealed that these teachers frequently assume responsibilities beyond classroom instruction, such as administrative decision-making, community engagement, and staff coordination. While these experiences contribute to the development of leadership competencies, teachers often struggle with role ambiguity, accountability pressures, and the absence of formal recognition. This situation illustrates a dual reality in which teachers develop leadership skills while remaining constrained by systemic limitations.

Supporting this perspective, studies published by the E-Palli Publishers emphasize the importance of leadership support and professional development in strengthening teachers' capabilities. Felix and Abrogena (2023) emphasized that structured professional development programs significantly enhance teachers' instructional competence and confidence in performing their professional responsibilities. Similarly, Natividad and Abrogena (2023) highlighted that the availability and use of technological learning tools influence teachers' ability to implement effective online teaching practices. Together, these studies reinforce the importance of institutional support and mentorship in empowering teachers, especially those assuming additional leadership responsibilities.

España (2024) further examined systemic barriers to teacher leadership within the Philippine education system. His study emphasized that principal-centered organizational cultures, limited access to leadership training, and minimal teacher involvement in school development initiatives restrict the recognition of acting leaders. These findings indicate that the challenges faced by TICs are not solely individual concerns but are also rooted in broader structural and institutional norms.

Rosales *et al.* (2023) introduced the "Dual Influence Model," which conceptualizes the role of teachers-in-charge as both a burden and an opportunity. On one hand, TICs experience increased workloads, emotional stress, and administrative pressure. On the other hand, these experiences can serve as valuable preparation for eventual promotion to principalship. This model highlights the paradox of acting leadership, where professional growth occurs alongside the risk of burnout.

Hungo *et al.* (2023) expanded the discussion by examining the lived experiences of teacher-principals in Leyte and

Southern Leyte. Their research identified themes such as limited resources, role conflict, and high community expectations. These contextual challenges intensify the responsibilities of acting school leaders, particularly in rural areas where community reliance on school leadership is strong.

Similarly, Bulusan (2025) explored the experiences of Filipino language teachers exposed to destructive leadership practices. His study highlighted the emotional burden faced by teachers in leadership roles and emphasized the resilience strategies they employ to maintain professional identity. Verano *et al.* (2025) also documented the multiple ancillary functions performed by school heads and identified coping strategies such as strategic workload management and community collaboration. These findings emphasize that acting leaders constantly balance institutional demands with personal well-being.

Taken together, these local studies illustrate that teachers serving as teachers-in-charge represent a form of invisible leadership within Philippine schools. Although they demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and dedication, their leadership contributions often remain undervalued within formal institutional structures. This situation highlights the need for capability-building programs, clearer promotion pathways, and institutional recognition to support and sustain these hidden leaders in the education system.

International research also provides valuable insights into the experiences of teachers assuming leadership roles without formal promotion. Wenner and Campbell (2017) conducted a comprehensive review of teacher leadership in the United States and identified common barriers such as insufficient administrative support, unclear role definitions, and limited opportunities for professional growth. Their findings suggest that teachers frequently undertake leadership responsibilities informally, yet their contributions are often overlooked within hierarchical school systems.

Similarly, York-Barr and Duke (2016) emphasized the importance of distributed leadership in schools. Their work argues that teachers regularly engage in leadership practices that improve instruction and school culture, but these contributions are rarely accompanied by formal recognition or compensation.

Poekert *et al.* (2017) further examined the tensions between system leadership and teacher leadership. Their research highlighted how teachers in acting leadership roles often experience identity conflicts, emotional labor, and micropolitical challenges within their institutions. Although these teachers gain professional satisfaction and growth from leadership experiences, they may also feel frustration when their responsibilities are not matched by authority or recognition.

Recent international studies conducted in Europe and Asia have also emphasized the emotional and organizational dimensions of teacher leadership. These studies reveal that acting leaders frequently balance

community expectations with institutional limitations while developing resilience and adaptive strategies to sustain their roles.

Collectively, foreign studies reinforce the global pattern that teachers serving in informal or acting leadership roles play a significant role in school improvement. However, their contributions often remain marginalized in terms of recognition and career advancement. These findings align with the Philippine context and highlight the universal need for clearer leadership pathways, professional development opportunities, and institutional support for teachers who assume leadership responsibilities without formal promotion.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

A phenomenological research design was employed in this study to explore the lived experiences of TICs who assume responsibilities typically associated with school principals without receiving formal promotion or recognition. Rooted in Husserl, this approach seeks to uncover the essence of participants' experiences by focusing on their perceptions and emotional complexities (Husserl, 1931). This methodology is particularly suitable for understanding the dual roles of TICs who are acting as classroom teachers and de facto school leaders.

The study investigated how TICs navigate their leadership roles, balancing administrative tasks and teaching duties without the authority or support typically afforded to formal school leaders. Arnido and Vibal (2025) noted that TICs often perform leadership functions such as decision-making and staff coordination, but without the formal recognition or training typically associated with these roles. Bélanger and O'Neill (2021) found that such informal leadership roles often lead to role conflict, emotional strain, and limited professional development. Through in-depth interviews, the study explored how these unrecognized leadership roles impact TICs' sense of identity, career trajectory, and well-being. This aligns with the work of Simbre *et al.* (2023), who highlighted the emotional and organizational toll on teachers in informal leadership positions. It provided insights into the challenges TICs face, contributing to a broader understanding of how informal leadership can be better supported and recognized within the educational system (Rosales *et al.*, 2023; Hongo *et al.*, 2023).

Local and Participants

This study was conducted in a municipality in Maguindanao del Sur. The municipality is predominantly rural, and public elementary schools often face challenges such as limited resources, teacher shortages, and the absence of formally designated school heads. In many of these schools, TICs are appointed to assume the leadership functions typically carried out by school principals. The context makes the municipality a suitable setting for exploring the lived experiences of teachers who perform dual roles as instructional leaders and administrators

without the benefit of formal promotion.

The participants were selected TICs assigned to various elementary schools. These participants were regular classroom teachers who were designated to perform the roles and responsibilities of a school principal. The study focused on their lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and perspectives as they navigate leadership responsibilities alongside teaching duties.

A purposeful sampling was used to identify participants who met the following criteria: (a) currently designated as Teacher-in-Charge in an elementary school; (b) has served in this capacity for at least one school year; and (c) willing to participate and share their lived experiences. The sample size was also determined by the principle of data saturation, ensuring that the collected narratives are sufficient to capture the essence of the phenomenon under investigation.

Research Instrument

Data were collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews guided by a prepared set of open-ended questions. These questions were designed to explore personal, emotional, and reflective dimensions of the participants' experiences, views consistent with the principles of transcendental phenomenology.

Data Collection Method

To ensure the observance of research protocols, the researchers submitted a permission letter to conduct the study to the offices of the district supervisors and TICs who serve as participants. Upon approval and confirmation, the researcher immediately secured informed consent, which outlined the rights, conditions, advantages, and methods of the study, and was signed by the identified participants for interviews. They were given 1 week to respond to the consent form. The researcher conducted the interviews using a research-based protocol, and all interviews were recorded with participants' approval. Then, transcription writing followed, and a member check was also conducted to validate the interview transcripts with the participants.

Data Analysis Method

The interview transcripts were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2026) thematic analysis. The researcher began by immersing in the data through repeated listening to audio recordings and careful reading of verbatim transcripts. Initial notes were taken to capture early impressions, emotional tones, and significant statements (Initial Themes). Then, using a systematic coding process, meaningful text segments were identified and labeled. Hence, the codes were clustered into potential themes that reflect broader patterns of meaning (Clustered Themes). Themes were refined by checking their coherence against coded extracts and the entire dataset, and finally, each theme was clearly defined, with attention to its scope and focus (Emerging Themes).

Trustworthiness

To ensure the rigor and integrity of this phenomenological

inquiry, the researcher employed strategies that address the four criteria of trustworthiness as articulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985): Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement, member checking, and peer debriefing. Transferability was supported by clear and detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and procedures. Dependability was ensured through documenting all steps of data collection and analysis. Confirmability was reinforced through bracketing and reflexive journaling, allowing the researcher to minimize personal bias and ensure that the findings accurately reflected the participants' authentic workplace experiences.

Ethical Consideration

The study includes obtaining informed consent, adapted and modified from Protacio (2021), Accad (2015), and Accad *et al.* (2015), to ensure participants were fully aware of the research purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by removing personal identifiers and securely storing data. The study upheld participants' rights and well-being, avoiding harm and ensuring safety throughout the process. Transparency in data collection was practiced by clearly communicating methods and maintaining honesty in data handling. Any conflict of interest was disclosed to preserve research integrity. The incentives provided were fair and non-coercive; all study materials were accurately translated to ensure comprehension and cultural relevance for all participants.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Discussion of Findings

The findings offer a deep understanding of the experiences of unpromoted teachers serving as teacher-in-charge, focusing on their experiences, the context of their experiences, and their view of themselves in the future. The following discussion presents the emerging themes identified, emphasizing their significance and alignment with existing research. Fourteen (14) themes emerged from the participants' experiences.

ET 1: Personal Growth Journey

Unpromoted teachers serving as Teachers-in-Charge (TICs) reported significant personal and professional growth despite their temporary status. The role provided continuous learning opportunities that expanded their professional experience and strengthened their self-confidence. These teachers emphasized how their leadership and management responsibilities, although outside their formal rank, enhanced their skills.

"Unpromoted Teachers-in-Charge experience a combination of hardships and learning, an experience full of challenges and sacrifices, yet accompanied by professional development and personal growth." P-1

"It's tough; stress has become an unavoidable part of daily life. Perhaps one of its effects on me is that I've become more skilled at handling problems and making decisions. I've become wiser." P-2

Unpromoted teachers serving as Teachers-in-Charge (TICs) reported meaningful personal and professional

growth despite their temporary status. Their expanded leadership tasks exposed them to continuous learning, strengthened decision-making, and built self-confidence. This aligns with Arnido and Vibal (2025), who emphasized that TICs develop resilience and adaptive leadership skills while handling administrative and coordination duties beyond classroom teaching. It is also supported by Rosales *et al.* (2023), whose Dual Influence Model frames the TIC role as both a burden and a developmental pathway showing that, while demanding, it can also serve as a stepping stone that strengthens leadership capacity. Similarly, international literature on teacher leadership explains that teachers who assume informal leadership responsibilities often gain professional growth and contribute to school improvement, even when their roles are not formally recognized (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; Schott *et al.*, 2020). This pattern is also consistent with research on “dual-role leaders” (e.g., teaching principals), where combining teaching and leadership builds competence but increases pressure (Wallin *et al.*, 2025).

ET 2: Role Authority Limitations

The participants consistently described the limitations they faced in holding a temporary position without full authority. Although they undertook significant leadership functions, their roles were often unrecognized, leading to professional discrimination and reduced legitimacy in decision-making. This lack of authority created difficulties in implementing policies and managing staff.

“Then the last one is pagkilala at motibasyon madalas ay di ganap na kinikilala kami bilang pinuno ng paaralan, kasi nga ang papel lang naming ay isang T-I ngunit ang ginagampanan naming responsibilidad ay pagiging school head. Ngunit nanatili kaming motivated dahil sa serbisyo sa paaralan at komunidad.” Lastly, in terms of recognition and motivation, TICs are often not fully acknowledged as school leaders because they hold only the “Teacher-in-Charge” title, despite carrying the full responsibilities of a school head. Even so, we remain motivated by our commitment to serving the school and the community.] P-3

These experiences reflect a leadership condition in which responsibility is assigned without commensurate authority and recognition, making leadership practice difficult and reducing the legitimacy of decision-making. This is consistent with distributed leadership discussions that highlight how leadership becomes problematic when responsibilities are distributed without a matching distribution of authority, support, and recognition (Harris, 2022). It also aligns with the teacher leadership literature, which notes that informal leaders often face unclear role definitions and limited institutional support even when their contributions are substantial (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

ET 3: Emotional Resilience Challenges

Serving as a TIC demanded high emotional resilience. Participants expressed experiencing fear, doubt, and emotional strain due to administrative pressures and

interpersonal conflicts. Despite these emotional hardships, they showed strong commitment and perseverance in their roles.

“Aside from the challenges and emotions, the experience of being a teacher-in-charge provides personal and professional growth, an appreciation for cooperation and support from others, opportunities to serve and inspire, and lessons about responsibility and integrity. These valuable experiences add depth and meaning to my role as a temporary school leader.” P-1

The participants’ narratives show that TIC leadership produces both strain and growth—requiring emotional endurance while also building leadership capacity. This supports the idea that unrecognized leadership roles carry psychological and emotional costs even as they become developmental experiences (Rosales *et al.*, 2023). From an organizational justice perspective, the imbalance between workload and recognition can affect well-being and motivation, which helps explain why TICs experience both perseverance and emotional burden in temporary leadership roles (Colquitt & Zipay, 2015).

ET 4: Workload Burden Pressures

TICs faced heavy workloads, often exceeding regular teaching duties. They managed extensive administrative and leadership responsibilities, frequently requiring significant personal sacrifices. The imbalance between workload and formal compensation led to physical exhaustion and emotional strain.

“Nung nagiging teacher in charge ako since 2008 naitalaga ako sa paaralan na iyon na walang permanenting guro, so nagiging lone teacher, ako ang labat ng coordinatorship, abh binibigyan ko pa ng allowance yung mga volunteer teacher, nagba-hire ako ng volunteer teacher na ako ang nagbabayad, personal within 1 year.” [When I became a teacher in charge in 2008, I was assigned to a school that had no permanent teachers, so I became the lone teacher. I handled all the coordinatorship and even provided allowances to the volunteer teachers. I hired volunteer teachers and personally paid them within a year.] P-5

These accounts show how TICs function as dual-role leaders whose workloads expand without commensurate structural support. This corroborates Simbre *et al.* (2023), who reported that TICs face excessive workloads without matching compensation or recognition, reinforcing the systemic gap between responsibility and incentives. The participants’ experiences also align with evidence that dual-role school leaders commonly experience role overload and competing demands when leadership and teaching responsibilities are combined, particularly in resource-limited contexts (Wallin *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, the imbalance between heavy workload and limited recognition can be understood through organizational justice perspectives, which explain that perceived unfairness in workload and outcomes can negatively affect morale, well-being, and stress levels (Colquitt & Zipay, 2015).

ET 5: Financial Strain Realities

Financial challenges were a consistent concern among the participants. Despite assuming leadership roles, they did not receive adequate monetary compensation for their increased responsibilities, leading to economic hardship. The lack of financial incentives exacerbated the stress and dissatisfaction they experienced while performing high-level duties.

“Para sa akin based sa experience ko as TIC na hindi, serving as OIC is mahirap, sa kadabilanan na feeling ko wala akong full authority sa iyong function as school head at the same time, instead na yung, yung resources mo is pang sarili sana or, I mean abbbb yung pwede mong, yung additional resources mo sana is m-maka cope sa other activities to cover yung untimely disbursement ng mooe is wala, mahirap” [For me, based on my experience as a TIC, serving as an OIC is difficult. I often feel that I do not have full authority in carrying out the functions of a school head. At the same time, the resources that I could have used for myself or the additional resources that could have helped me cope with other activities to cover the untimely disbursement of MOOE are not available. It is truly challenging.] P-2

This aligns with the findings of Bulusan (2025), who discussed the financial strain felt by teachers in leadership roles without formal recognition. Participants in this study similarly reported personal financial sacrifices to maintain school operations, reflecting systemic inequities in the treatment of TICs.

ET 6: Emotional Leadership Burden

In this context, TICs experience heavy emotional and psychological stress due to the inherent challenges of leading peers. The absence of formal authority and the difficulty in managing professional relationships contribute to emotional strain. TICs often experience self-doubt and internal conflict, particularly when decisions impact their colleagues and are not formally recognized. This emotional burden reflects the relational and psychological complexities of their leadership roles, which are not merely administrative in nature.

“I think siguro, kung ganito din siguro yung base sa experience ko lalo na sa mga kasama is feeling ko abbb pag wala silang expectancy na ma promote sila in the next years to come, yung para bang yun nga parang is bilang abh school head serving as teacher 1, or teacher 1 serving as school head is parang degrading din sa part abbb kasi yun nga abbbb hind imo fully maexercise yung function mo as school head para bang title lang siya without compensation at the same time parang hind imo Talaga siya fully ma-enjoy.” [I think that, based on my experience especially with my colleagues if they don't have expectations of being promoted in the coming years, then serving as a school head while technically still holding a Teacher-I position, being a Teacher-I serving as school head, can feel degrading. This is because you can't fully exercise your functions as a school head; it feels like just a title without proper compensation, and at the same time, you can't fully enjoy the role.] P-2

The emotional resilience required aligns with the

findings of Rosales *et al.* (2023), who documented that unrecognized leadership often leads to heightened stress, self-doubt, and emotional exhaustion.

ET 7: Recognition and Equity Issues

A central challenge reported by TICs is the lack of professional recognition and equity. Despite performing duties similar to those of officially appointed school heads, they often feel unrecognized and undervalued. Financial constraints compound this inequity, as TICs are expected to assume leadership responsibilities without receiving commensurate financial compensation.

“Unang una is abh base sa experience ko is minsan is belittling o nakakapanliit kasi minsan like for example sa ibang division they already enjoying yung abbbb... one school one principal na item at the same time para bang abh degrading din sa part as kwan as school head serving as OIC tapos yung mga kasama mo ay the same, the same parang as you din.” [First of all, there are moments when the role feels belittling or diminishing. For example, in other divisions they are already enjoying the “one school, one principal” item, while in my case, serving only as OIC sometimes feels degrading, especially when your colleagues are on the same level or position as you. It creates a sense of imbalance and makes the role even more difficult to carry.] P-2

“Syempre pag teacher in charge ka, medyo mahiya rin principal ka pero teacher I ka lang, yun. [Of course, when you're a teacher in charge, it can be a bit awkward if you're acting like a principal, but you're still only a Teacher I.]” P-5

This theme aligns with Simbre *et al.* (2023), who reported that unpromoted teachers are frequently subject to inequities in recognition and compensation, despite performing duties similar to those of teachers with formal titles. Such inequities damage morale and undermine professional identity, as TICs are often perceived as less legitimate because of their lack of formal recognition.

ET 8: Commitment to Service

Despite these challenges, unpromoted TICs consistently demonstrate a strong commitment to service. Their motivations are rooted in ethical responsibility and a deep sense of duty rather than the pursuit of personal gain or status. TICs endure significant hardships, yet their willingness to continue serving reflects their dedication to the school community and their students.

Bukod sa kalakip na talaga ang stress is paminsan natatanong ko yung sarili ko, kaya ko pa ba? Pero kung titignan ko yung paaralan na halos abbb.. dugo't pavis ko is doon ko na pinundar, kabit sarili kong pera is mas lalong lumalakas ang loob ko na mas mahalin ko pa at mas gawin ko pa ang best ko para mapaunlad yung paaralan nay un.” [Aside from the inevitable stress, sometimes I ask myself, ‘Can I still do this?’ But when I look at the school where I've poured almost my blood and sweat, and even my own money, it gives me more courage to love it even more and to do best to further improve the school.] P-3

This theme aligns with the work of Verano *et al.* (2025), who noted that teachers in leadership roles often

demonstrate a strong commitment to service, even in the face of adversity. Their dedication to the school and their colleagues speaks to their resilience and professionalism, despite limited formal support and recognition.

ET 9: Expanding Leadership Perspective

The experiences of TICs contribute to an expanded perspective on leadership. Participants indicated that their informal leadership roles provided them with a deeper understanding of responsibility, accountability, and service. This growth reflects an increasing commitment to continuous improvement and proactive planning.

“Sa akin is para bang, lalo pa at ngayon is medyo kabit papaano ay Maganda na ang flow ng school is thankfull din ako sa mga taong laging anjan, on the other hand, naisip ko din na marami kasi akong dinanas na mga problema na hindi ko nakasanayan na minsan nagsisi ako kung bakit ko pinasok ito, pero eventually naman is naisip ko naman, narealize ko rin na baka siguro in due time baka meron din tayong maging incentive, meron din tayong rewards na matatanggap.” [For me, especially now that the school is running more smoothly, I am thankful for the people who are always there. On the other hand, I also realize that I’ve faced many challenges I wasn’t used to, and at times I even questioned why I took on this role.

But eventually, I came to realize that, in due time, there may also be incentives and rewards that we will receive.”) P-2

This development is consistent with the findings of Rosales *et al.* (2023), who emphasized how TICs, despite operating in an informal leadership capacity, expand their leadership competencies through direct, lived experience. Their evolving leadership identity is shaped by the contextual pressures they face and is foundational to their professional maturity.

ET 10 5: Heavy Leadership Workload

TICs also face a significant workload that combines teaching duties with extensive administrative and leadership responsibilities. The excessive workload not only intensifies leadership struggles but also contributes to physical exhaustion and emotional burnout. The imbalance between the expectations placed on TICs and the lack of formal compensation or workload adjustments exacerbates these challenges.

“The particular experience or moment as a teacher-in-Charge that I considered most meaningful was when I had to face and resolve a serious problem in the school that directly affected both teachers and students. At that time, I was compelled to be strong, fair, and deliberate in making decisions, even though I did not yet hold a formal position as principal. The challenge proved my ability to lead and highlighted the importance of trust and accountability in my role. That moment taught me the true meaning of leadership, not merely about titles or positions, but about the trust others place in you and your ability to do what is right for everyone. Moreover, this experience strengthened both my professional and personal growth. I learned how to communicate

effectively, make fair decisions, and safeguard the welfare of everyone in the school.” P-1

This finding is supported by the work of Simbre *et al.* (2023), which highlighted how the overwhelming workload for unpromoted teachers often leads to stress and fatigue, underlining the need for more structured support mechanisms. High accountability, limited authority, emotional strain, professional injustice, and a heavy workload are defining features of the TIC experience. Despite these significant challenges, TICs demonstrate a profound commitment to their roles, which supports their leadership development. These findings highlight the crucial disconnect between the degree of responsibility expected from TICs and the formal support they receive. The results underscore the need for structural changes in the educational system to recognize better and support underpromoted leaders, as their contributions are essential to the functioning of schools.

ET 11: Professional Growth Orientation

Unpromoted TICs view their roles as a pathway for continuous professional growth. Despite the numerous challenges they face, participants maintain a future-oriented mindset, committed to professionalism and to the development of their teaching practice. Their experiences as temporary leaders have strengthened their resilience and motivation to improve.

“Siguro, abh... makikita ko yung sarili ko in the near future na still I am the one, still fighting for the best na gagawin ang labat para magampanan ang mga responsibilidad. Mapromote man o hindi, or in Allah’s will alhamdulillah kung mapromote kung hindi naman ay alhamdulillah parin. What is important is nagawa ko ng maayos yung responsibilidad ko bilang teacher in charge.” [Perhaps... I see myself in the near future still being the one, still striving to do my best and fulfill all responsibilities. Whether I get promoted or not, or if it’s Allah’s will Alhamdulillah if I am promoted, and Alhamdulillah even if I’m not the important thing is that I have carried out my responsibilities well as Teacher-in-Charge] P-3

This finding resonates with the studies of Arnido and Vibal (2025), who highlighted the personal and professional growth that TICs undergo despite lacking formal recognition or leadership roles. The continuous learning they experience through hands-on leadership contributes to their readiness for future roles.

ET 12: Leadership Aspirations Development

Serving as a TIC enhances the participants’ readiness for leadership roles and fuels their aspirations for promotion and professional fulfillment. Their exposure to school leadership encourages them to envision themselves as future leaders, particularly in the governance of the Bangsamoro region.

Based on my experiences as Teacher-in-Charge, I see myself in the future as a reliable, responsible, and inspiring school leader. This role has given me the skills, confidence,

and perspective to take on greater responsibilities and to continue serving in education with integrity and genuine care for all members of the school community. P-1

“Siguro, abh nakikita ko ang sarili ko abbbb sa hinaharap as teacher in charge na kung bibigyan man ako sana ng pagkakataon na mapromote siguro sapat na yung labat ng mga accomplishments ko para naman mapagbigyan ng pagkakataon na mapromote at mas mabigyan ko pa ng abbh pagpapabalaga bukod sa mahal na mahal ko ang trabaho ko is mas magawa ko pa yung aking responsibilidad bilang isang school leader.” [I see myself in the future as a teacher-in-Charge who, if allowed to be promoted, hopes that all my accomplishments will be enough to grant me that chance. I want to be promoted so that I can give even greater value to my work. I truly love my job, and I want to fulfill my responsibilities as a school leader even more effectively.] P-3

This finding is aligned with the work of España (2024), who noted that informal leadership roles offer significant insights into school management and provide individuals with aspirations for formal leadership positions. As TICs are directly involved in leadership decisions, they are naturally inclined to pursue further professional growth and recognition.

ET 13: Rank-Role Misalignment

Despite their positive outlook and aspirations, participants are highly aware of the misalignment between their official rank and the leadership roles they undertake. The mismatch between their rank as Teacher-I and their leadership responsibilities creates discomfort and role confusion, especially when they must lead peers of the same or higher rank. This structural contradiction affects their confidence and decision-making, as they navigate the paradox of serving as school heads without the formal authority that accompanies the role.

“I think siguro, kung ganito din siguro yung base sa experience ko lalo na sa mga kasama is feeling ko abbh pag wala silang expectation na ma promote sila in the next years to come, yung para bang yun nga parang is bilang abh school head serving as teacher 1, or teacher 1 serving as school head is parang degrading din sa part abbh kasi yun nga abbbb hind imo fully maexercise yung function mo as school head para bang title lang siya without compensation at the same time parang hind imo Talaga siya fully ma-enjoy.” [I think that, based on my experience—especially with my colleagues—if they don’t have expectations of being promoted in the coming years, then serving as a school head while technically still holding a Teacher-I position, being a Teacher-I serving as school head, can feel degrading. This is because you can’t fully exercise your functions as a school head; it feels like just a title without proper compensation, and at the same time, you can’t fully enjoy the role.] P-2

Similar issues have been observed by Simbre *et al.* (2023), who reported that TICs often experience frustration and tension between their leadership duties and their low rank, which undermines their professional identity and decision-making power.

ET 14: Empowering Team Influence

Despite the limitations of rank and authority, participants recognize their empowering influence on their colleagues. They view leadership as a responsibility to guide, support, and empower others, rather than to exercise control. Many participants expressed the belief that their colleagues rely on them for guidance, stability, and professional direction, reinforcing their sense of accountability. This empowering perspective on leadership reflects a service-oriented view, with a focus on collective growth rather than individual status.

“Abh bilang teacher in charge harapin mo na kung anong meron ka at hintayin mo nalang kung saan ka ipadpad ng promotion nay an. Ma promote ka o hindi just accept it and face the reality na wala ka nalang, wag mo sabihin na wala kang silbi kabit konte dahil yung bata na binabawakan mo pati mga guro at whole community nakasalalay sayo ang kinabukasan.” [Ahh, as a teacher in charge, you face what you have and wait to see where promotion takes you. Whether you get promoted or not, accept it and face the reality. Please do not say that you’re useless, even a little, because the students you handle, the teachers, and the whole community depend on you for their future.] P-5

This is consistent with the findings of Verano *et al.* (2025), who noted that TICs, despite lacking formal recognition, often play a crucial role in mentoring and fostering collaboration among their peers, strengthening team cohesion and professional growth. The views of unpromoted Teachers-in-Charge reveal a complex blend of optimism, aspiration, discomfort, and responsibility. While they remain growth-oriented and future-focused, participants are acutely aware of the rank-role misalignment that hampers their confidence and professional self-worth. This finding aligns with Simbre *et al.* (2023), who noted that TICs experience role confusion due to a mismatch between their responsibilities and official rank, which undermines their leadership effectiveness. Despite these structural contradictions, their strong sense of responsibility toward their colleagues, students, and the broader school community strengthens their commitment to leadership. Their leadership identity is not rooted in formal authority or titles but in empowering others and collaborating for the collective good. This service-centered leadership orientation aligns with Verano *et al.* (2025), who suggested that TICs often serve as informal mentors to foster collaboration and professional growth. The study also underscores critical policy and administrative gaps within the educational system. Although TICs are relied upon as de facto school leaders, they face significant barriers to recognition, compensation, and formal support. The disconnect between their considerable leadership responsibilities and the lack of institutional acknowledgment creates both professional and emotional strain, as Rosales *et al.* (2023) observed, noting that the emotional burden of informal leadership can hinder long-term effectiveness. These findings suggest the need for structural reforms to empower TICs better, ensuring

their continued professional development and sustaining their leadership contributions, as emphasized by España (2024). Addressing these gaps through clearer promotion pathways, recognition of their leadership roles, and provision of adequate support would ensure TICs' long-term effectiveness and contribute to the growth of the educational community.

CONCLUSIONS

TICs experience significant personal and professional growth, demonstrating resilience and a strong commitment to their school communities. However, TICs face challenges such as the absence of formal authority, lack of recognition, and insufficient compensation, which undermine their confidence and decision-making capabilities. The emotional strain and role discomfort they experience reveal gaps in the system that prevent them from fully realizing their leadership potential. Despite the lack of formal authority, TICs gain valuable leadership experience but face challenges related to emotional resilience, workload pressures, and financial strain. They take on responsibilities beyond teaching, including administrative tasks and community engagement, which contribute to their growth but also add to their emotional burden. TICs aspire to formal leadership roles but are aware of the gap between their responsibilities and official rank, which affects their professional confidence. Their strong sense of responsibility leads to role discomfort and emotional strain, as their contributions are often undervalued and lack the structural support needed to succeed. Overall, TICs are operating in a leadership vacuum, with their potential untapped due to systemic barriers and insufficient recognition. Their contributions remain undervalued, and their leadership aspirations remain unfulfilled.

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