Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Through the Lens of K-3 Teachers

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Abstract. This study unearthed the experiences of k-3 teachers in implementing mother-tongue-based multilingual education in the Davao del Sur Division. Ten (10) K-3 teachers implemented the mother tongue-based multilingual education in teaching the subjects who participated in the study. This study used a phenomenological approach to extract the participants' ideas. The virtual in-depth interview was employed to gather some information regarding their respective narratives as they implemented the mother tongue-based multilingual education to enhance the learning outcome of K-3 learners. The thematic analysis of the responses from the participants of the study revealed the positive and negative experiences of k-3 teachers as they implemented mother tongue-based multilingual education and delved into (positive) strengthened cultural identity and confidence, gaining positive support from stakeholders and improved curriculum skills. On a negative note, insufficient instructional materials, compliance with compulsion, and insubstantial teacher training. The limited learning resources affected the implementation and caused struggles in the delivery of the curriculum. However, the K-3 teachers employed the following coping mechanisms: peer collaboration and co-teaching, attending language proficiency training, and capacitating teachers to use Mother Tongue. These mechanisms enabled the K-3 teachers to have a smooth implementation despite the limitations of teachers' experiences. The insights drawn from the study's findings were social development, contribution to MAEM, and development of teachers' expertise.

1. Introduction

Global academic institutions host several thousand languages to communicate meaning. This linguistic diversity presents an assortment of challenges in the education system. The language children should learn, which should be used for instruction in schools, needs careful examination to understand the current state of language use in education. Indeed, the vital role played by language in cognition and learning processes is a well-established fact. For K–3 instructors, mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB–MLE) offers both benefits and challenges, particularly in situations with varying linguistic diversity. The availability of suitable instructional tools and materials in different mother tongues is one important problem. MTB-MLE implementation is hampered by the difficulty many K-3 teachers have

in creating or locating educational resources that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for their communities. Despite its potential advantages, mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in China is confronted with several difficulties. The variety of languages spoken in the nation is one major problem. There are several minority languages spoken in China, and each has distinct linguistic and cultural traits of its own. It can be logistically difficult to implement MTB-MLE without resources for curriculum development, teacher training, and multilingual support (Gao Huang, 2019). The prevalence of Mandarin Chinese as the official teaching language presents another difficulty. Minority languages may become marginalized in the educational system despite MTB-MLE's mission to protect and advance minority languages. Students may feel pressured to study Mandarin to pursue academic and professional possibilities (Yin Zhang, 2019). Minority communities may experience language shifts and a loss of cultural identity due to this linguistic hegemony. Mother tongue-based multilingual education in England faces various obstacles, mainly because of the nation's varied linguistic environment and educational regulations. The implementation of MTB-MLE projects may also encounter obstacles due to the centralized character of the English education system. Curriculum, assessment, and language policy decisions are frequently determined at the federal level, where the linguistic diversity found in local areas may not be sufficiently taken into account (Lytra Martin, 2019). In addition, there is a dearth of competent educators who speak minority languages. It can be difficult to find and keep instructors who are proficient in both minority languages and English, especially in places where linguistic diversity is substantial. Moreover, this shortage underscores broader systemic issues within education systems that may require targeted policies and initiatives to attract and support educators with diverse linguistic competencies (Martin-Jones Xia, 2019). In Vietnam, despite initiatives to support linguistic diversity and cultural preservation, the implementation of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) encounters several obstacles. The predominance of Vietnamese as the main language of instruction in schools is one important problem. Education policies frequently give priority to teaching Vietnamese language instruction above the development of minority languages, even though Vietnam is home to over 50 ethnic minority groups, many of whom speak unique languages and dialects (UNESCO, 2019). Another issue is the scarcity of content in minority languages and limited resources. It can be expensive and time-consuming to create curriculum materials and instructional tools in several minority languages. This prevents many schools from having the necessary resources to support MTB-MLE programs, which makes it more difficult to carry out these projects successfully (Tran Le, 2019). The availability of teaching resources in different mother tongues is a major problem. Although there are over 100 languages spoken in the Philippines, there are few resources and materials available in many of the indigenous tongues. The provision of high-quality mother language education is hampered by this paucity, especially in isolated and marginalized populations (Eck, 2019). In addition, there is a dearth of certified educators who speak their native tongues. While many teachers speak English or Filipino well, they may not be as fluent in their native tongues. This has an impact on the standard of instruction and the feasibility of putting MTB-MLE programs into practice (Carpio, 2019). There are more difficulties with linguistic preferences and attitudes. While indigenous languages may be neglected or stigmatized, Filipino and English are frequently seen as languages of prestige and upward mobility. This may affect the desire of students and their families to engage in MTB-MLE activities

(Tupas, 2019). Additionally, there is a pedagogical problem in switching from Filipino to English as the primary language of instruction in higher grades. Learning gaps and academic challenges may result from students who have only received instruction in their mother tongue finding it difficult to adjust to other languages (Datu 2019). In Davao del Sur Division, particularly in Sta. Cruz South District, teachers of Grad1 to Grade 3 struggled with this new policy. There are no sufficient learning materials available to effectively deliver the curriculum using the mother tongue. There were trainings conducted but they were not enough to equip the teachers with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for the children to learn the basic skills. It is in this context that the researcher came up with this study. To ensure that students acquire excellent reading abilities in all languages, teachers must strike a careful balance between teaching new languages and retaining competency in the home tongue. Further compounding these difficulties are the MTB-MLE systems' restricted resources for K–3 teachers in terms of professional development and support. Inconsistencies in teaching practices and outcomes result from the fact that many instructors do not receive enough training or direction on how to apply MTB-MLE in their classrooms. To determine the outcomes of this study and the intended recipients of the findings, several individuals and entities stand to benefit. Department of Education Officials, particularly those in Sta.

Cruz South District, Davao del Sur Division, is poised to gain insights into the implementation of mother tongue-based multilingual education for primary-grade learners. This may lead to more flexible approaches that consider students' home languages, potentially resulting in policies that encourage the use of learners' first languages in communication. K to 3 teachers, who participated in the study, will benefit from reflecting on their experiences with implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education. This serves as a valuable baseline for enhancing their teaching practices. Additionally, learners will gain insights into how they can adjust and adapt to the policy transition, while the study will shed light on reasons why some learners may struggle to perform tasks, as observed by their teachers. Lastly, future researchers can use this study as a foundation to explore other aspects of physical education and conduct further investigations in different locations and communities to broaden the understanding of the phenomenon under study. In this study, the term "Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education" refers to the educational approach implemented in all public schools Garcia, M. L. (2019), particularly in Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 3, as part of the K to 12 Basic Education Program since School Year 2012-2013. Specifically, it involves the utilization of the Cebuano dialect or language as the medium of instruction in teaching Kindergarten to Grade 3 students, facilitating the delivery of the curriculum.

1.1. Purpose of the Study—The purpose of this phenomenological study is to determine the teacher's struggles in implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education, their coping mechanisms as well as their insights into complying with DepEd policies for curriculum innovation.

1.2. Research Questions—
(1) What are the experiences of the teachers as they implemented the mother tongue-based multilingual education?
(2) What are the coping mechanisms of the teachers on their struggles in implementing the mother tongue-based multilingual education?
(3) What educational management insights can be drawn from the experiences and struggles

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of the teachers in implementing the mother tongue-based multilingual education?

1.3.   Definition of Terms—Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE): MTB-MLE refers to an educational approach that uses students' native language or mother tongue as the medium of instruction in early years of schooling, alongside the introduction of additional languages.

Teacher Experiences: Refers to the perceptions, encounters, and subjective viewpoints of teachers as they engage in the process of implementing MTB-MLE in their classrooms and schools.

Coping Mechanisms: Strategies, behaviors, or psychological techniques that teachers employ to manage and adapt to the challenges, difficulties, or stresses encountered during the implementation of MTB-MLE.

Educational Management Insights: Refers to the lessons, observations, or practical knowledge derived from understanding teachers' experiences and coping mechanisms in MTB-MLE implementation, which can inform educational policies, practices, and leadership strategies.

1.4.   Significant of the Study—The significance of the study based on the provided research questions can be framed as follows:

Understanding Teacher Experiences: This study provides valuable insights into the experiences of teachers implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE). By exploring these experiences, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges, successes, and professional growth of teachers involved in MTB-MLE programs.

Identifying Coping Mechanisms: Examining the coping mechanisms employed by teachers when facing challenges in MTB-MLE implementation offers practical strategies and insights. This aspect of the study helps in identifying effective ways for educators to navigate difficulties related to language policies, instructional strategies, and community engagement.

Educational Management Insights: The experiences and struggles of teachers in MTB-MLE can inform educational management practices. Insights drawn from this study can guide policymakers, school administrators, and educational leaders in developing supportive policies, providing targeted professional development, and fostering a conducive environment for MTB-MLE implementation.

Enhancing Policy and Practice: By addressing these research questions, the study contributes to the enhancement of MTB-MLE policies and practices. It supports evidence-based decision-making in education by highlighting areas where improvements are needed and showcasing effective strategies that can be scaled or adapted in diverse educational contexts.

Promoting Inclusive and Effective Teaching: Ultimately, this research aims to promote inclusive education practices and improve learning outcomes for students through better support for teachers involved in MTB-MLE. By understanding and addressing the needs of educators, the study contributes to fostering culturally responsive teaching environments and enhancing educational equity.

1.5.   Theoretical Lens—The study extensively examined a range of scholarly literature to gather substantial insights and perspectives. This included research articles, studies, and other relevant literature, all of which were considered to offer a comprehensive understanding and broader context for the study. A significant aspect explored was the importance of language,

particularly the mother tongue and multilingualism, in facilitating communication of thoughts and emotions, fostering self-understanding, and ensuring knowledge aligns with personal existence. Additionally, language serves a pivotal role in transmitting cultural heritage and societal values across successive generations (Sahin, 2018). Students whose primary language differs from the one used in the classroom often face higher dropout rates or perform inadequately in the initial grades. Research indicates that a child's first language is optimal for fostering literacy skills and achieving academic success during elementary school years. From infancy, a child's mother tongue profoundly shapes their cognition and emotional experiences, as emphasized by Nishanthi (2020). Therefore, leveraging the mother tongue as an educational medium significantly enhances learning outcomes. In countries grappling with significant challenges related to multilingualism and multiculturalism, the learners fail to perform well in both oral and written communication in the particular field and when the learner fails to utter or use a particular word in discourse, the flow of speech is interrupted (Halik et al.,2021). The term "mother tongue" refers to an individual's first language, typically spoken at home or in their country of origin. People generally feel most comfortable communicating in their mother tongue, though multilingual individuals may not necessarily feel equally proficient in all languages they know. UNESCO advocates for the use of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) as a strategy to foster students' confidence and active participation in learning. The study by Manuel (2019) emphasized that the learning materials used in the teaching-learning process must be adaptable to the local needs and preferences to make learning more accessible and open to all. MTB-MLE also contributes to the development of learners' creativity. UNESCO advocates for creative and collaborative participation in the teaching and learning

process through the integration of the mother tongue in education. Johnson (2019) discussed the significance of teachers in designing learning experiences by planning curriculum, providing tools, and offering students choices and opportunities to express themselves creatively. Therefore, educators play a significant and crucial role in implementing language policies in the classroom. When teachers integrate the mother tongue, they should recognize that fostering creativity and imagination can propel students toward a brighter future and inspire them. The MTB-MLE education program aims to cultivate learners who perceive opportunities in all aspects, including their cultural backgrounds. Such learners approach situations positively and are prepared for life's challenges. They embrace opportunities by taking initiative, whether they succeed or encounter setbacks. In the classroom, using the mother tongue enables students to think critically and make informed decisions, enhancing their engagement with learning in their primary language. As a result, critical thinking empowers students to make deliberate judgments rather than acting on impulse. Thus, teachers should appreciate and never lose the chance to make the learners see their worth, especially since educators and learners spend most of their time together at school. The use of the mother tongue ensures Hopeful and sensitive learners who can develop a strong and healthy identity. Furthermore, learners have high hopes and dreams for their future. Allowing the learners to speak about their aspirations and dreams in life will greatly affect them, enabling their minds to work and able to empathize with other beings. According to Price (2021), teachers can be extremely instrumental in helping sensitive students deal with these anxiety-filled situations and they are tasked with helping to contribute to the overall learning experience of children. Therefore, critical thinking empowers students to make thoughtful decisions rather than impulsive ones. Hence, educators should seize ev-
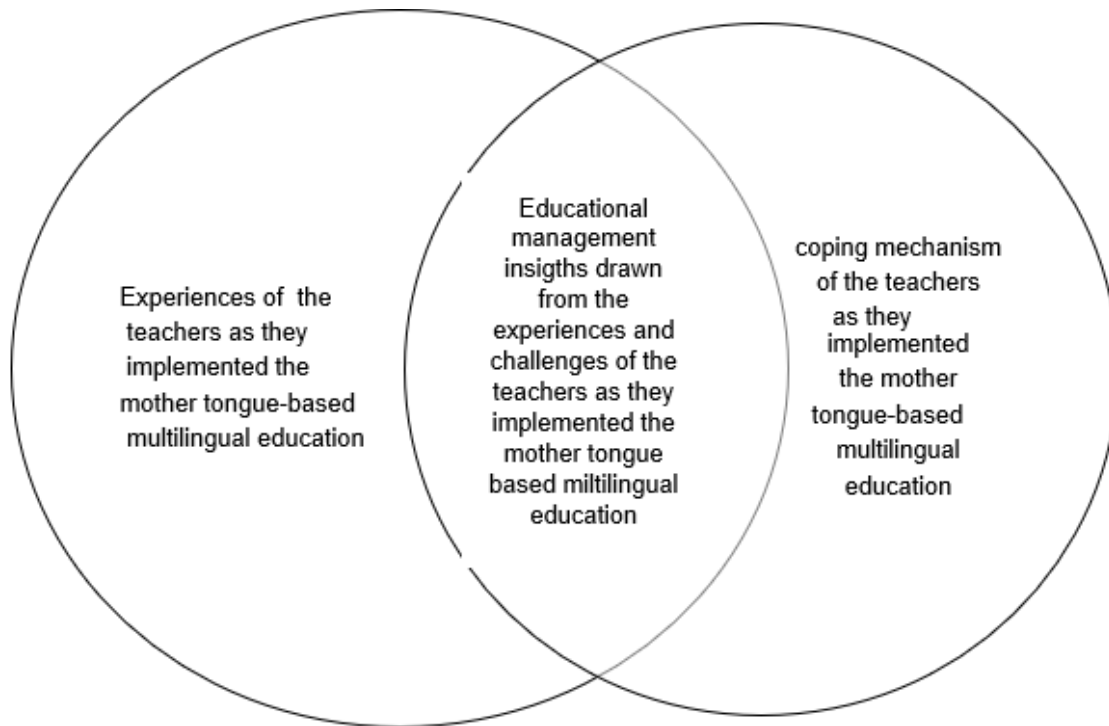
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Fig. 1. The Conceptual Framework of the Study

ery opportunity to help students recognize their value, given the significant time they spend together in school. The use of the mother tongue ensures optimistic and empathetic learners who can cultivate a strong and positive sense of identity. Moreover, learners harbor ambitious aspirations and dreams for their future. Encouraging students to articulate their hopes and dreams significantly impacts them, enabling them to engage their minds and empathize with others. According to Price (2021), teachers play a crucial role in supporting sensitive students in managing anxiety-provoking situations, contributing significantly to children's overall learning experience.

2. Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design used, the role of the researcher, the research participants, the data collection and analysis, the trustworthiness, and the ethical considerations. The three most common qualitative methods are participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. Each method was particularly suited for obtaining a specific type of data. Participant observation was appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviors in their usual contexts. In-depth Interviews (IDI) were optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics were being explored. Focus groups were effective in eliciting data on the cultural norms of a group and in generating broad overviews of issues of concern to the cultural groups or subgroups represented. Phenomenology was commonly described as the study of phenomena as they manifest in our experience, of the way we perceive and understand phenomena, and of the meaning phenomena have in our subjective experience. More simply stated, phenomenology refers to the study of an individual's lived experience of the world Smith, David Woodruff (2019). By examining an experience as it

was subjectively lived, new meanings and appreciations could be developed to inform, or even re-orient, how we understand that experience. Furthermore, phenomenology examines a particular group of people's lived experiences to document and describe their realities and perceptions within a specific context (Gary et al., 2020). It allowed the researchers to investigate the essence of the experiences to understand agriculture from the participants' perspectives.

2.1. Philosophical Assumptions—The philosophical assumption was a framework used to collect, analyze, and interpret the data collected in a specific field of study. It establishes the background used for the coming conclusions and decisions. Typical philosophical assumptions have different types and are elaborated on below. Good research – undertaking the selection of the topic, problem, or area of interest, as well as the paradigm. Understanding research paradigms that crucial as they guide scientific discoveries through their assumptions and principles (Park et al., 2020). paradigm was a set of assumptions that provides a conceptual framework or a philosophical one for a worldview, which enabled researchers to construct organized studies around the world. Accordingly, Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) outlined the critical inter-relationships between these components and asserted that the paradigms of positivism and interpretivism both consist of ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods. Ontology. Ontology can be defined as the essence of existence, including everything that exists (Rahmadani, 2021). Ontology comes from the Greek, "Ontos" and "Logos". Ontos means "that exists" while Logos means "knowledge". Based on this, ontology was defined as a branch of philosophy related to the nature of an existence, including whether or not something exists (Rokhmah, 2021). There were several realists in a research setting, including the researcher's reality, the realities of the persons being studied, and the realities of the readers or audiences who were interpreting the study. In this study, the realities of the implementation of MTB-MLE to K to 3 learners. In this study, I relied on the voices

and interpretations of the participants through extensive quotes and themes that reflected their words and provided evidence of different perspectives. The participant's answers to the study were coded and analyzed to build and construct the commonality and discreteness of responses. I made sure that the responses of the participants were carefully coded to ensure the reliability of the result. The researcher upheld the authenticity of the responses and precluded them from making personal biases as the study progressed. Epistemology. According to Dew Jr. and Foreman (2020), Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of our knowledge. In summary, it's about how people learn things and discover the truth. It answers the following queries: How much knowledge is there? What justifies assertions about knowledge? What connection exists between the subject of the research and the researcher? The most appropriate method for this kind of research was phenomenology, as I'll demonstrate using theme analysis. In this sense, individual researchers "hold explicit belief." The purpose of this research was to gather important details on the experiences of the teacher in implementing MTB-MLE for K to 3 learners Sta. Cruz South District, Davao del Sur Division. I assured them that I would establish a close interaction with the participants to gain direct information that would shed light on the knowledge behind the inquiry, particularly on the teachers' experiences as they went through their teaching, implementing mother-tongue-based multilingual education. Axiology Axiology was described as a branch of philosophy that discusses how to use it. Axiology comes from the Greek word "axim" which means value.

The axiological value relates to whether or not is appropriate, good or bad, whether knowledge is appropriate or not (Rokhmah, 2021). Axiology suggests that the researcher openly discusses values that shape the narrative and includes her interpretation in conjunction with the interpretation of participants. I uphold the dignity and value of every piece of information obtained from the participants. The researcher understands the personal and value-laden nature of the information gathered from the study. Therefore, I preserve the merit of the participants' answers and carefully interpret them in light of their interpretations. Rhetorics. This philosophical assumption stressed that the researcher may write in a literary, informal style using a personal voice, qualitative terms, and limited definitions. In the study, the researcher used the first person to explain the experiences and coping mechanisms of the K to 3 teachers and thoroughly discussed their responses during the interview. As a researcher, I agree with the DepEd Order that the MTB-MLE was implemented in all public schools, specifically in Kindergarten and grades 1, 2, and 3, as part of the K to 12 Basic Education Program starting in the School Year 2012-2013. A range of factors must be considered to have an effective and sustained Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education program. Some of these were identified as the best practices in MTB-MLE implementation in the selected Southeast Asian countries such as strong policy support, interagency partnership, appropriate curriculum, qualified and well-trained teachers, community involvement, and thorough documentation, monitoring, and evaluation. However, only a few of these factors are evident in implementing the said program in the Philippines. In addition, several challenges were encountered that may have hindered the program's success. A functional framework for MTB-MLE in the country was formulated to improve its implementation.

2.2. Qualitative Assumptions—Research methodology was described as a systematic way to solve a problem. It was the science of studying how research was to be carried out. The procedures by which researchers describe, explain, and predict phenomena are called research methodology. In this study, the experiences and coping mechanisms of the K to 3 teachers, specifically those from Sta, were unleashed from their narratives. Cruz South District, Davao del Sur Division. Quantitative research produces data from numeric numbers and facts to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between several variables (Ahmad et al., 2019). Each of these approaches to qualitative research provides a different perspective and orientation from which the research was conducted. The perception of the researcher can be further defined by their specific viewpoint or worldview, which defines how they perceive that world (Creswell Poth, 2018). From the definition, human experience was viewed as a cornerstone of knowledge about human phenomena and not an unreliable source. The second premise of phenomenological research was that the everyday world is a valuable and productive source of knowledge. Analyzing how events occur in our daily lives allows us to learn much about ourselves and reap key insights into their nature. Phenomenology was described as a rigorous, systematic, and critical analysis of an event. The prime purpose of this method was to explain the structure of the lived experience of an event. This methodological inquiry starts from phenomena of interest and aims to understand the subjective meaning of the lived experience of an event. The method was utterly based on the interpretive domain Estabrooks PA (2019).

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2.3. Design and Procedure—This study used qualitative research employing phenomenology. Interviews were conducted with individuals with first-hand knowledge of an event, situation, or experience. With this in mind, the researcher must identify the problem of the study and establish a starting point from which the development of their framework and perspective would begin (Creswell, Poth, 2018).

Through this process, the researcher constructed the universal meaning of the event, situation, or experience and arrived at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon. In this study, phenomenology attempts to extract the purest, untainted data. In some interpretations of the approach, the researcher uses bracketing to document personal experiences with the subject to help remove him or her from the process.

2.4. Research Participants—The participants in this study were composed of ten (10) informants. The selected informants were K to 3 teachers from Sta. Cruz South District, Davao del Sur Division. All the participants were K to 3 teachers from nearby schools implementing mother-tongue-based multilingual education. They must have been teaching for at least three (3) years. All the participants were from the K to 3 grade level, regardless of their age, sex, and marital status. Qualitative analyses typically require a smaller sample size than quantitative analyses. Qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to obtain feedback for most or all perceptions. Obtaining most or all of the perceptions would lead to the attainment of saturation. Saturation occurs when adding more participants to the study does not result in additional perspectives or information. Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend the concept of saturation for achieving an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies. For phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommends five (5) to 25, and Morse (1994) suggests at least six (6). There were no specific rules when determining the appropriate sample size in qualitative research.

2.5. Ethical Considerations—Creswell (2007) emphasized that qualitative researchers face many ethical issues that surface during data collection analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports. In this study, the researcher would deal with school heads in public schools. To ensure an authentic response from the participants, the researcher was responsible for exercising extra caution and maintaining the confidentiality of the study. The rights of the participants were highly considered. Besides, they would not be forced to be part of the study when they would refuse. Considering the nature of qualitative studies, the interaction between researchers and participants can be ethically challenging for the former, as they were personally involved in different stages of the study.

Therefore, the formulation of specific ethical guidelines in this respect is essential. The relationship and intimacy established between researchers and participants in qualitative studies can raise a range of ethical concerns, and qualitative researchers face dilemmas such as respecting privacy, establishing honest and open interactions, and avoiding misrepresentations. In this special issue, Fleming (2018) highlights some ethical dilemmas commonly encountered by an 'insider researcher,' including the power differential and ongoing relationships with participants. It was, however, important to further consider the fundamentals of ethical research involving human participants. In addition, it was of the utmost importance for qualitative researchers to specify in advance which data

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were collected and how they were to be used. He also stated that informed consent was a prerequisite for all research involving identifiable subjects, except in cases where an ethics committee judges that such consent was not possible and where it was felt that the benefits of the research outweighed the potential harm. A minimum requirement for an interview study should be that written consent is obtained from the participant after they have been informed, verbally and in writing, about the following issues: the purpose and scope of the study, the types of questions that were likely to be asked, the use to which the results were put, the method of anonymization and the extent to which participants' utterances were used in reports. Participants should also be given time to consider their participation and ask the researcher questions. The researcher would follow ethical considerations in this study as part of the qualitative research process. The researcher was responsible for informing the participants completely about the different aspects of the research in incomprehensible language. The needed clarifications include the following issues: the nature of the study, the participants' potential role, the identity of the researcher, the objective of the research, and how the results were published and used. Similarly, this study was submitted to the ethics committee of Rizal Memorial College, a graduate school, for verification and approval.

2.6. Role of the Researcher—The role of the researcher in this study was to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of study participants. It involves asking informants to talk about things that may be very personal to them. Sometimes, the explored experiences are fresh in the participant's mind, whereas reliving past experiences may be difficult on other occasions. However, the data were being collected, and the researcher's primary responsibility was safeguarding participants and their data. Mechanisms for safeguarding must be clearly articulated to participants and approved by a relevant research ethics review board before the research begins.

2.7. Data Collection—According to Creswell (2013), an essential step in the process was to find people or places to study and to gain access to and establish rapport with participants so that they would provide good data. A closely interrelated step in the process involves determining a strategy for the purposeful sampling of individuals or sites. Once the inquirer selects the sites or people, decisions must be made about the most appropriate data collection approaches. To collect this information, the researcher develops protocols or written forms for recording the data, such as interviews or observational protocols. Also, the researcher needs to anticipate issues of data collection, called "field issues," which may be a problem, such as inadequate data, needing to leave the field or site prematurely, or contributing to lost information. Finally, a qualitative researcher must decide how he or she would store data so that they can easily be found and protected from damage or loss. In this study, there were seven steps in the data collection process. First was the site or individual; the participants were the K to 3 teachers from Sta. Cruz South District, Davao del Sur Division. Second was the access and rapport; a letter from the Dean of the Graduate School was given to the graduate student on October 18, 2023, for the approval of the Division Superintendent; a letter of permission for the Schools Division Superintendent, the school Principal, and the concerned K to 3 teachers

was prepared for easy collection of data on October 25, 2023 The third was the purposeful sampling strategy; all participants experienced the phenomenon being studied. There were ten (10) informants selected in this study. The selected K to 3 teachers were considered a group of individuals who could best inform the researcher about the research problem. They were also considered individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and can facilitate the collection of data on November 15, 2023 The fourth was the forms of data, the process of collecting information involved primarily in the Virtual In-Depth Interview (IDI) with the ten

(10) informants on November 20-30, 2023. The fifth was the recording procedures. A protocol was used in the observation and interviewing procedures. A predesigned form records information collected during an observation or interview. The recording and data collection took place December 10-15, 2023. The sixth was the field issues; limited data collection was engaged in this study. The last or seventh step was storing data on December 20, 2023; Davidson (1996) suggested using the database to back up information collected and note changes for all types of research studies.

2.8. *Data Analysis*—In this study, all the data collected were carefully examined and thoughtfully analyzed. The researcher first described personal experiences with the phenomenon under study. The researcher began with a full description of her own experience of the phenomenon. This is an attempt to set aside the researcher's personal experiences so that the focus can be directed to the participants. He developed a list of significant statements. He then finds statements about how the individual was experiencing the topic, lists these significant statements as having equal worth, and works to develop a list of nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping, statements. The researcher took the significant statements and then grouped them into larger units of information, called "meaning units" or themes. He wrote a description of "what" the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon. Next, he wrote a description of "how" the experience happened. This is called "structural description," the inquirer reflects on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced. Finally, he wrote a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating textural and structural descriptions. This passage was the "essence" of the experience and represents the culminating aspect of

a phenomenological study. Thematic Content Analysis. A thematic analysis strives to identify patterns of themes in the interview data. One of the advantages of thematic analysis was that it was a flexible method that can be used both for explorative studies, where the researcher does not have a clear idea of what patterns were being searched for, as well as for more deductive studies, where the researcher knows exactly what he or she is interested in. No matter which type of study was being done and for what purpose, the most essential thing in the analysis is that the researcher respects the data and tries to represent the results of the interview as honestly as possible (Mortensen, 2020). Environmental triangulation. Environmental triangulation was limited only to studies where the findings can be influenced by certain environmental factors. This type of triangulation uses different settings, locations, and other factors such as the time, day, and season of the study. The idea was to determine which of these factors influences the information received. These factors were then changed to see if the findings were the same. It plays a crucial role in establishing the validity of research findings. By testing the consistency of findings under varying environmental factors, such as different settings, locations, and times,

the method contributes significantly to the research's credibility (Naeem, Saira, 2019). This study chose environmental triangulation as it best suited the research environment.

2.9. Framework of Analysis—The data analysis plan used in this research study was Collaizi's seven steps. Colaizzi's seven-step analysis method provides researchers with clear, logical, and sequential steps (Wirihana, Welch Williamson et al 2021). This rigorous analysis provides a concise and thorough description of the phenomenon under study. I observed several steps in conducting a thematic analysis. The first stage in extracting qualitative data for analysis from the tape recordings was transcription. This was done to gain greater familiarity with the data and deeper insight. I relied on my resources to do the transcription, using my personal computer and some reliable headphones. I spent several nights listening to the interviews to deepen my understanding of the nuances of the language and semantics of the participants. Transcripts were read repeatedly, significant statements, formulated meaning, cluster themes, developing exhaustive descriptions, producing the fundamental structure, and seeking verification of the fundamental structure to extract thematic analysis. As cited by (Mohamad, 2022; Zaniel, Mohamad Parcon,2023) The participants' responses were recorded, noted, and transcribed. The significant statements from the participants' responses were singled out as the basis for getting the code (Mohamad, 2022). Practice varied considerably in terms of agreeing to conventions with transcribers. Some negotiated the layout and conventions required, including researchers who wanted the kind of detailed transcriptions appropriate for conversations or narrative analysis. Others were sometimes less directly involved and accepted the conventions generally used by the one transcribing the information. The next step was data extraction and analysis. I used manual techniques based on note-taking and summary while listening to the recordings. My manual technique usually included verbatim recordings of selected spoken words. I selected quotations about central issues or when what was said seemed important or interesting. This technique helped me code, sort, and collect data for interrogation. It was also instrumental in understanding links and relationships between issues. All these efforts and procedures included saving verbatim spoken words from the transcripts, which could be cross-referenced to the thematic displays or the maps. To summarize, the following steps represent the Colaizzi process for phenomenological data analysis (Wirihana et al., 2018) Phase 1. Read and re-read all the transcribed interviews to make sense of them Phase 2. Extract significant statements. These were phrases or sentences that directly pertain to the investigated phenomenon Phase 3. The process of giving meaning to the statements. During the process, pertinent quotes were broadly categorized, subsequently, themes were generated based on multiple statements that conveyed similar meanings Phase 4. Repeat steps 1-3 for each interview then the researcher could begin to create themes based on the formulated meanings Phase 5. Compile an exhaustive description of everything generated in steps 1-4 Phase 6. Summarized the exhaustive description so that there was an identification of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon Phase 7. The credibility of the data was ensured through discussions with experts and independent reviewers
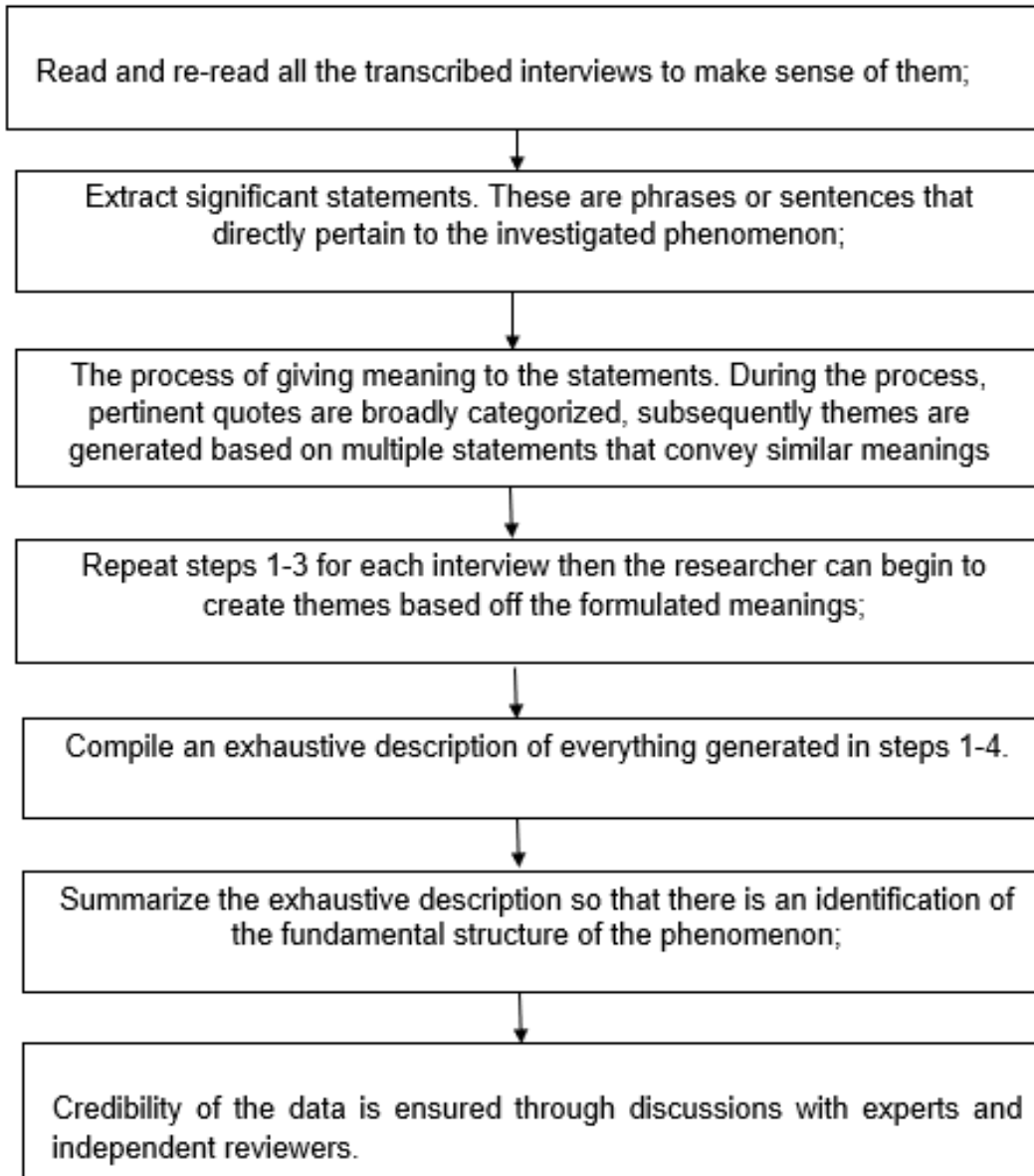
2.10. Trustworthiness of the Study—

Fig. 2. Analytical Framework of the Study

Trustworthiness, a cornerstone of qualitative research, was about establishing credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. In a qualitative study, trustworthiness is paramount as the results and findings hinge on the researcher's conduct. It was a critical factor in evaluating the research's worth, as qualitative research demands honesty in all data and details. Trustworthiness made a researcher's study worthy of reading, sharing, and being proud of. Credibility was how confident the qualitative researcher is in the truth of the research study's findings. The researcher in this study believed that honesty in everything you do is essential to attain worthwhile success. The researcher has no derogatory records or administrative issues that ruin her integrity. Lincoln and Transferability describes how the qualitative researcher demonstrates that the research study's findings apply to other contexts. In this case, "other contexts" can mean similar situations, similar populations, and similar phenomena. Confirmability is the degree of neutrality in the research study's findings. In other words, this means that the findings are based on participants' responses and not the researcher's potential bias or personal motivations. This involves ensuring that researcher bias does not skew the interpretation of the research participants' statements to fit a specific narrative. The researcher thoughtfully recorded the information using the audit trail in this situation, highlighting every step of data analysis to provide a rationale for the decisions made. This helps establish that the research study's findings accurately portray participants' responses. Dependability was the extent to which other researchers could repeat the study and ensure that the findings were consistent. In other words, if a person wanted to replicate your study, they should have enough information from your research report to do so and obtain similar findings as your study did. A qualitative researcher can use an inquiry audit to establish dependability, which requires an outside person to review and examine the research process and the data analysis to ensure that the findings are consistent and can be repeated. In this component, the database was very important in backing up information collected and noting changes for all research studies. All the data collected must be kept appropriately for future use as references.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter is enwrapped with the results accumulated from the lived experiences of the elementary school teachers who instituted the mother tongue-based multilingual education in improving teaching strategies to enrich the teaching and learning experiences of K-3 learners. This chapter further discusses the coping mechanisms for their challenges in teaching. This chapter discussed the themes that emerged from the data gathered. The result primarily presents the description and background of the participants assigned pseudonyms to conceal their identities. Before the discussion, the researcher would like to establish the symbols used as the researcher presents the quotations based on the study participants' responses. Regarding the transcribed interviews, the researcher also used codes to refer to the research participants.

3.1. The Experiences of K-3 teachers in implementing the Mother Tongue-based multilingual education in teaching —The Philippines has a language problem. Among its more than 7,000 islands, nearly 200 languages have sprung up, each with speakers numbering from a few hundred to millions worldwide. Spanish, English, and Filipino have each been proposed solutions, but questions of inclusivity, representation, and effectiveness have hounded their

statuses as official national languages. This gap is what mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) intends to address. Signed into law as part of Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, MTB-MLE is implemented as part of the Department of Education's (DepEd) K-12 Basic Education Program. The researcher believed that mother tongue-based learning can make education more accessible, especially for those on the margins of society. Children learn concepts with domestic images and metaphors by referring to things in their surroundings.

3.1.1. Positive Effect: Strengthened Cultural Identity and Confidence

—According to Ladefoged (2019), Mother Tongue-Based programs give pupils a way to strengthen their sense of self-worth and connect with their cultural background. Students who learn in their mother tongue have a positive reflection of their language and culture in the classroom, which boosts their self-esteem and sense of belonging. Furthermore, Pinnock's (2019) research highlighted the function of MTB in promoting intergenerational knowledge transfer and cultural continuity. Students have a deeper understanding and respect for their cultural traditions, values, and practices when they can learn in their mother tongue. Thus, they become more resilient and self-assured in negotiating their cultural identities in a multicultural society. The significance of MTB-MLE in fostering self-affirmation and cultural empowerment across linguistically varied groups is highlighted by these findings. The role that MTB-MLE programs play as a catalyst for cultural preservation and renewal was highlighted by Martinez and Gomez (2020). Students who get instruction in their mother tongue can interact with their cultural background, customs, and principles in an academic setting. Students benefit from this because they feel proud of and connected to the classroom because they see their language and culture valued and promoted. MTB-MLE programs foster an inclusive and encouraging learning atmosphere that supports students' confidence and self-esteem, as highlighted by Garcia and Ramirez (2020). Students who get instruction in their mother tongue are more likely to interact with the material and express themselves clearly, which boosts their confidence and sense of competence. Additionally, studies by Martinez and Gomez (2020) demonstrated how MTB-MLE helps kids develop positive language attitudes and linguistic pride. Students feel prouder and in control of their education when they perceive that their language and culture are appreciated in the classroom. This boosts their motivation and self-esteem. These results highlight how crucial MTB-MLE is for encouraging students' overall growth and giving them the tools they need to thrive in the classroom and their personal lives.

3.1.2. Gaining Positive Support of Stakeholders

—Risadi and Ardiasa (2020) recognized the importance of the mother tongue as a language in schools in a multilingual society. When combined with proper material like comics or interactive media, the mother tongue can be helpful in learning a subject (games on a computer). As an outcome, in their Motivation Exploration Implementation Theory for Gamification in Education, Cabello et al. (2021) stressed the significance of gamification in instruction, where motivation, exploration, and implementation are essential aspects in accomplishing a challenge. The study by Alimi, Tella, Adeyemo, and Oyeweso (2020) in Osun State supports this finding about the impact of Mother Tongue on Primary Pupils' Literacy and Numeracy Skills, concluding that teachers must imple-

ment these initiatives to increase pupils' literacy and numerical skills. Significant determinants follow from a simple decision to determine the language of instruction, particularly in the early years of schooling. Proper language selection improves educational success (Perez Alieto, 2018). The use of one's mother tongue in the classroom in a multilingual context has an impact on how students learn. Scholarly studies by Garcia and Meneses (2020) have demonstrated that instruction in students' mother tongues increases engagement and participation in educational endeavors. Their research indicates that when instruction is given in a language that they can easily comprehend, students are more inclined to interact with the subject matter and with one another. Students feel emboldened to express themselves and work with others in a more dynamic and vibrant learning environment as a result of their increased involvement. Similarly, research by Lopez and Cruz (2020) highlighted how teaching students in their mother

tongue helps them feel like they belong and have ownership over their learning, which increases their drive to study. The significance of utilizing students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds to encourage active participation in the learning process is shown by these findings. By implementing mother tongue-based practices, teachers can establish inclusive and encouraging learning environments that enhance student participation and eventually lead to greater academic achievement. Garcia and Martinez (2021) emphasized how teaching students in their home tongue might help them make meaningful connections between what they have learned and still need to learn. By building on the language proficiency and cultural backgrounds of their current students, teachers can create learning experiences that are more accessible and meaningful to students. These results highlight how crucial it is to use mother tongue instruction to improve student comprehension and encourage academic success.

3.1.3. Improved Communication Skills — According to Garcia and Ramirez (2020), MTB-MLE programs give students a solid foundation in their mother tongue, which acts as a launchpad for the development of efficient communication skills. Students who learn in a language they are comfortable with are better able to communicate clearly and confidently. The process of engaging with language in the classroom fosters active learning and critical thinking skills. Through discussions, debates, and collaborative activities, students acquire new language skills and learn how to analyze and interpret language usage in meaningful ways. This promotes deeper comprehension and appreciation of language as a dynamic and evolving communication system. Furthermore, MTB-MLE promotes collaborative and participatory learning environments where students have meaningful conversations with teachers and peers, as Martinez and Gomez (2020) highlighted. In ad-

dition to improving students' language skills, this interactive method develops their capacity for successful communication in various social and academic settings. The researcher's insight underscores that MTB-MLE not only enhances students' language skills but also fosters collaborative and participatory learning environments. This approach encourages meaningful interactions between students, teachers, and peers, thereby developing students' ability to communicate effectively across various social and academic contexts. By emphasizing interactive learning methods, MTB-MLE supports holistic student development beyond just language acquisition, promoting skills that are crucial for lifelong learning and success. Furthermore, research by Santos and Rodriguez (2020) and Nguyen and Tran (2020) emphasized the function of MTB-MLE in fostering students' bilingual or multilingual proficiency. Students who begin their education in their mother

tongue and work their way up to multiple languages get flexible communication abilities that help them engage with various people and easily transition across linguistic contexts. Insightfully, MTB-MLE supports linguistic diversity and promotes cultural understanding and identity among students. It allows them to maintain strong connections to their heritage while

acquiring language proficiency crucial for academic and professional success in a globalized world. Moreover, the gradual transition from the mother tongue to other languages ensures that students build a solid foundation in their primary language, facilitating the acquisition of subsequent languages and enhancing overall cognitive development.

3.1.4. Challenges Encountered: Insufficient instructional material—Most respondents claimed that the insufficiency of books and learning materials challenged them. They also revealed that students and teachers did not commonly use words and vocabulary in the available learning materials in K-3. That makes it difficult for them to translate in their dialect. However, they admitted that MTB-MLE as a medium of instruction is useful because it serves as a bridge for easy comprehension. But MTB subject is not easy for students and teachers due to the unfamiliarity of words in Bisaya. One of teachers' experiences with their learners includes the absence of books written in the mother tongue and the lack of vocabulary of topics taught. According to the participant, the absence of books written in the mother tongue and the lack of vocabulary pose significant challenges for teachers implementing MTB-MLE programs. Without appropriate learning materials in the mother tongue, teachers may struggle to deliver instruction and support students' language development effectively. Implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) highlights the complexities in navigating both this

approach's advantages and disadvantages. By critically evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of MTB-MLE implementation, educators can better understand the factors contributing to its success and identify areas for improvement. Sahora (2018) discussed issues while bringing out-of-school children into the mainstream, including the unavailability of learning material in the child's mother tongue, untrained teachers, and the absence of specially developed bridge courses. Special Learning Support Material should be provided in the child's mother tongue, and educators should be trained and fluent in the child's mother tongue. The ultimate aim of any education system is to equip children with the numeracy, literacy, and wider skills they need to realize their potential. The data implies that the Philippines is more advanced than other Southeast Asian countries in implementing Mother Tongue-Based instruction. Although the department tried to provide more teacher training and address the scarcity of books and other teaching materials, many teachers still encountered problems with the policy due to the cultural and linguistic diversity in the schools where they were teaching (Billones Cabatbat, 2019).

3.1.5. Compliant with Compulsion—Some learners understand complex concepts more easily. However, there are also challenges when it comes to adapting to learning by using their mother tongue, and they have difficulty

transitioning to English and Filipino. Learners cannot grasp English as a second language. Most of the learners have difficulty understanding the unfamiliar words being used in mother tongue-based teaching. The spelling of the

words is much longer compared to English/Filipino. Even teachers find it hard to translate some words into the dialect because they have not been used in teaching before. The challenge of understanding unfamiliar words in learner's guides, particularly when translated into Bisaya, arises from several linguistic and cultural factors. Unlike English or Filipino, Bisaya has its distinct linguistic structure and vocabulary, often resulting in longer spellings or more elaborate constructions for conveying the same concepts. The Philippine government established the K-12 Curriculum in 2012, and along with it, the MTB-MLE program aimed at improving the learners' fundamental abilities, developing more competent citizens, and preparing graduates for lifelong learning and career development (Apolonio, 2022). Insightfully, the MTB-MLE program recognizes the importance of language in education, affirming that learning in one's mother tongue can facilitate better understanding and mastery of concepts. By fostering bilingualism and multilingualism, the program supports academic achievement and promotes cultural preservation and identity among learners. The aim program is for learners to become effectively bilingual, and bicultural and at the same time, achieve excellence in education (Benson and Kosonen, 2021; Heugh and Mohamed, 2020). With the MTB-MLE implementation at the K3 level, its importance is well noted in the creation of a highly effective curriculum design (Facullo Khunakene et al., 2022). One of its important implementation features is its configuration with the assertion that students learn and ingest concepts by appropriately employing the native or the first language.

3.1.6.   *Insubstantial teacher training*—The respondents revealed that even though they enjoyed teaching the subject, especially about complex concepts. However, it is a challenge for them because they have no comprehensive training on how to deal with the local languages English and Filipino. They admitted that they need more pedagogical training on strategies. There is confusion and difficulties in teaching other learning areas like mathematics and science because of some mathematical or scientific terms that cannot be translated into the mother tongue. Novice teachers have experienced difficulty in the beginning years of teaching mother tongue since they have not yet attended any training or seminars related to teaching mother tongue-based multilingual education. The challenges participants face in teaching subjects like Mathematics, Science, and MAPEH within a mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) framework highlight the complexities of language integration across different academic disciplines. Mathematical and scientific terms often contain specific concepts and nuances that may not have direct translations in mother tongue languages. The significant challenges that educators may encounter when transitioning to teaching in a mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) context, particularly without prior training or support. Adjusting to teaching in one's mother tongue can be a complex process, especially when navigating unfamiliar concepts and terminology and determining effective teaching strategies. Mondal (2020) emphasizes the importance of adequate teacher training before implementing new teaching methods in real classroom settings. Insufficient training may lead to students struggling to understand concepts and failing to meet academic expectations. He suggests exploring alternative teaching approaches that could enhance the learning experience compared to current methods. It is crucial for teachers to thoroughly comprehend various teaching strategies to adapt when initial methods do not yield the desired outcomes effectively. Further-

more, Mondal highlights that teachers can build students' confidence and facilitate more effective learning by employing correct procedures. Bernardo, Aggabao, Tarun (2018), in their study entitled "Implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) Program: Reactions, Attitudes, and Perceptions of Teachers," found that the teacher respondents encountered moderate difficulty in the preparation of learning tasks, curriculum guide and school's MTB-MLE facilities such as textbooks and other printed materials, availability of MTB-MLE facilities and adaptation of available MTB facilities. The study of Anudin (2018) focuses on the challenges affecting the implementation of the MTB-MLE based on the views of teachers, parents, and students using Chavacano, which deals with the implementation of the MTB-MLE program focusing on the views of teachers using Binisaya. The study of Bernardo, Aggabao, and Tarun (2018) tested the

implementation of the Ilokano mother tongue. In the content analysis study of Oliveros (2021), she found out that there are challenges to the implementation of the MTB-MLE program as a language policy, such as the beliefs of the teachers, even the parents; the practices of teachers, students, and parents; and the management of the government on providing needed materials and other resources. Hence, she concluded that the MTB-MLE program must be revisited to provide technical assistance to all. Figure 3 shows the experiences of teachers in implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education in teaching and decision-making and the emergence of the six themes: strengthened cultural identity and confidence, gaining positive support of stakeholders, improved curriculum skills, insufficient instructional materials, compliant with compulsion, and excessive administrative tasks and insubstantial teacher training.

3.2. Coping with the challenges encountered in implementing Mother tongue-based multilingual education—A country that aims to successfully implement MTB-MLE has government agencies that establish supportive policies with clear directions for the program. In the Philippines, a policy underscored the significance of mother tongue instruction and legalized its implementation. Partnerships among non-government organizations, community organizations, and local government units are very

significant in developing high-quality programs on language and education. Teachers' training is very relevant to the success of Mother Tongue-Based Instruction. Well-trained teachers are more effective in teaching in their mother tongue. In Singapore, MT teachers are highly qualified and knowledgeable about the subject of their mother tongue. Good training and continuing support are given to them. This is the reason why the country does not have problems with persistently ineffective teachers.

3.2.1. Peer Collaboration and Co-Teaching—Teachers ask for technical assistance from colleagues, specifically from the grade-level leader who is a master teacher. They shared that it is less stressful if everyone in the community supports each other for the benefit of the learners. In the tribal community, the stakeholders helped the teachers unlock unfamiliar

words and better explain the meaning to the learners. Sometimes, the respondents admitted that they asked their MTB coordinator for some alternatives to deliver the lesson effectively. Teachers employ various coping strategies, including self-training and study, asking for help from a more knowledgeable community member, and shouldering the expenses of
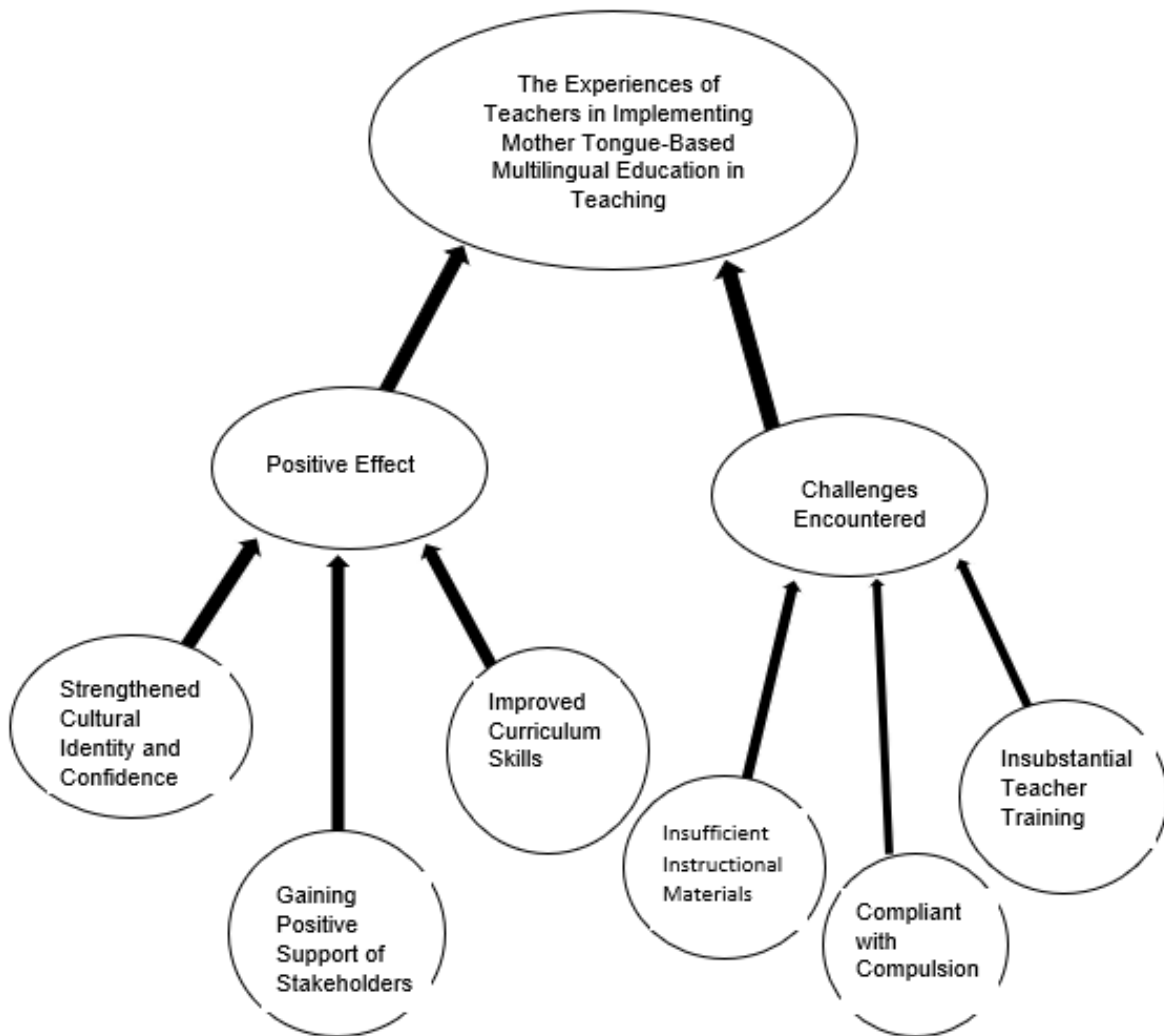
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Fig. 3. Experiences of teachers in implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education in teaching

instructional material reproduction. Williams et.al (2020), stated that a participatory process centering on the language community is crucial to ensuring appreciation, acceptability, accuracy, and ownership. In the Philippines, participatory orthography development and instructional materials production have been initiated among several non-dominant language communities, which in turn have encouraged participation and motivation for Mother Tongue-Based Instruction within the communities. Risadi and Ardiasa (2020) recognized the importance of the mother tongue as a language in schools in a multilingual society. When combined with proper material like comics or interactive media, the mother tongue can be useful for learning a subject (games on a computer). As an outcome, in their Motivation Exploration Implementation

Theory for Gamification in Education, (Cabello et al. 2021) stressed the significance of gamification in instruction, where motivation, exploration, and implementation are essential aspects in accomplishing a challenge. The study by Alimi, Tella, Adeyemo, and Oyeweso (2020) in Osun State revealed the impact of Mother Tongue on Primary Pupils' Literacy and Numeracy Skills, concluding that teachers must implement these initiatives to increase pupils' literacy and numerical skills. Significant determinants follow from a simple decision to determine the language of instruction, particularly in the early years of schooling. This means that proper language selection leads to educational success (Perez Alieto, 2018). The use of one's mother tongue in the classroom in a multilingual context has an impact on how students learn.

3.2.2. Capacitating Teachers on the Use of Mother Tongue

To overcome the struggle in implementing MTB-MLE, the respondents gave real objects and explained the lesson well to the learners so that they would understand it well. The implementation of mother tongue-based multilingual education made teachers employ a variety of strategies to deal with the difficulties they faced. The respondents assist teachers in improving the activities and assessment in teaching using the mother tongue. They provided effective strategies in the implementation of MTB-MLE, which includes engaging in online research activities for documents such as modules and lesson support and creating adaptable teaching materials that align with the curriculum. The diversity of coping strategies reflects the resourcefulness and adaptability of teachers in responding to the unique demands of MTB-MLE. By employing a variety of approaches, such as self-training, seeking assistance from colleagues, shouldering expenses for instructional materials, and leveraging online resources, educators can address specific

challenges they encounter in teaching subjects in their mother tongue. Engaging in online research for documents such as modules and lesson support, as well as creating adaptable teaching materials that align with the curriculum, are indeed effective strategies for overcoming challenges in mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) implementation. Daba (2020) expressed that The DepEd issues an order using the mother tongue for the children or learners to easily understand lessons, to easily adapt what is to be learned, and to be able for them to express their feelings, ideas, or thoughts towards the lessons. The parents viewed that the government probably wants pupils to learn better and faster using their mother tongue. Aguilar (2019) was a forerunner in the use of Hiligaynon as a medium of instruction in Grades 1 and 2. The results revealed that Hiligaynon-taught children are far better than English-taught children in reading, math, and social studies. The study affirmed that L1 pupils were able to transmit the knowledge learned in their L1 to English and the L1 pupils can cope with the L2 pupils in

their knowledge of English within six months after being exposed to English as a medium of instruction.

3.2.3. Attending Language Proficiency Training—A teacher can be viewed as one whose profession includes teaching, instructing, imparting knowledge and innovations, and guiding learners to pass through the learning process. Attending language proficiency training is a valuable investment for teachers seeking to enhance their effectiveness in MTB-MLE implementation. By equipping educators with the necessary linguistic skills, cultural competence, and pedagogical knowledge, these training opportunities contribute to the success and sustainability of MTB-MLE initiatives, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students alike. Furthermore, participants indicated that widening their MTB vocabulary enables them to effectively communicate mathematical concepts that may not have direct translations in the mother tongue. This flexibility allows you to bridge the gap between mathematical terminology and students' linguistic proficiency, ensuring that all learners have equitable access to the curriculum regardless of their language background. Children who are learning in their native language understand the curriculum better. According to Siyang (2018), using one's native language as a language of instruction is much more effective than using English. Furthermore, students who were taught in their native language learned more than those who were taught in English and similarly, asserted that everybody has the right to receive an education in their native language. For a student to have equal access to education and reap the same benefits as others, mother tongue education is required, and it plays a major role in ensuring school attendance, enhancing the quality of education, and integrating children into society. Children who are learning in one 's mother tongue enjoy learning more and learn quickly because they feel more at ease in their surroundings. Cahapay's (2020) research discovered a relationship between learners' attitudes toward their mother tongue and educational achievement. The present study weaves scientific proof that learner attitudes against the mother tongue are associated with academic performance in the context of a monolingual climate among the large body of diverse research in the area of language instruction. Figure 4 shows the Coping with the challenges in implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education and the emergence of the three themes: Peer collaboration and co-teaching, capitating teachers on the use of mother tongue, and attending language proficiency training.

3.3. The insights are drawn from the teachers in implementing Mother tongue-based multilingual education—The in-depth interview generated many ideas that we can learn from regarding the participants' experiences in implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education for K-3 learners. The realizations I gained from the detailed discussion were promoting a friendly learning environment, building self-confidence, and capacitating teachers to use the mother tongue in teaching.

3.3.1. Social Development and Contribution to MAEM—Grades 1 and 2 display distinct behaviors in school, such as having a short attention span, being easily moved by emotions such as excitement, fear, anger, or being shy. The experiences during the early years in school

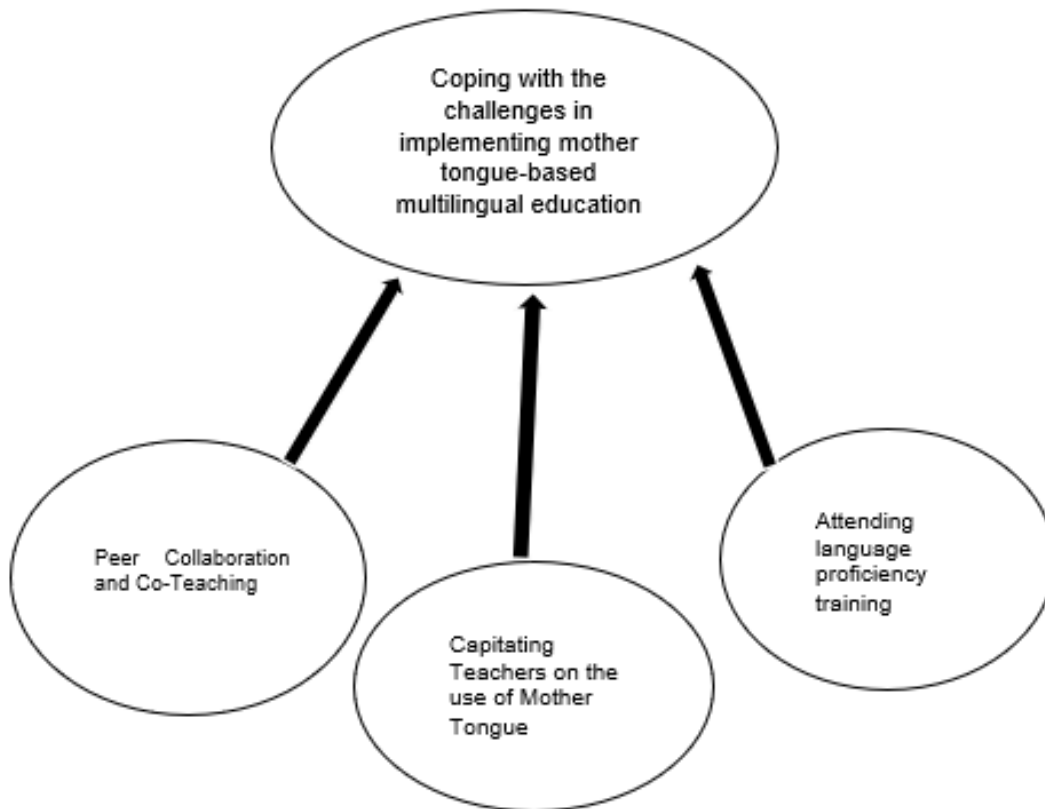Fig. 4. Coping mechanisms of the teachers in implementing the mother tongue-base multilingual education

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can significantly influence the learners' outlook on studies, careers, and life. Promoting a friendly teaching-learning environment must be an important task for teachers. The participant emphasizes the importance of collaboration and collective action in advancing the goals of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and achieving broader societal impact. By working together with various stakeholders, including community members, fellow educators, and policymakers, teachers can promote awareness and understanding of the benefits of MTB-MLE and advocate for its widespread adoption and implementation. The MTB-MLE program fosters social development by encouraging familiarity and comfort with a child's native language. The integration of the program aims to foster students' proficiency in their Indigenous languages. Fundamentally, MTB-MLE also aims to enhance appropriate cognitive and reasoning skills, enabling children to acclimatize and communicate effectively in various vernaculars, commencing formally with the child's mother tongue (Tajolosa, 2022). Integrating the mother tongue into the educational system equips learners with the necessary skills for their everyday interactions within their homes and communities. Through instruction in their mother tongue, learners gain a deeper understanding of and familiarity with the concepts taught in conventional education (Soruç et al., 2018). This approach ensures that children remain attentive to their schoolwork due to the seamless connection between the language used at home and in the classroom (Saneka and de Witt, 2019).

3.3.2. Developing teachers' expertise— This method entails a comprehensive strategy involving a variety of tactics to ensure teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and assistance to proficiently teach in multilingual environments. Training sessions and workshops centered on MTB-MLE principles and teaching techniques furnish educators with fundamental understanding and hands-on direction. Furthermore, observing and being mentored by experienced teachers enables newcomers to witness successful MTB-MLE methods firsthand and obtain individualized assistance and input. Collaborative learning groups promote peer interaction, knowledge exchange, and continual professional growth prospects. Resource provision and ongoing support are essential pillars in developing teachers' expertise in Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). Collaborating with various stakeholders, such as educational institutions, government agencies, and community organizations, demonstrates a proactive approach to addressing the resource needs of MTB-MLE initiatives. These dynamic needs necessitate a feeling of adaptability to societal developments. Language enrichment is important for the entire educational system, whether it is seen as a problem from a micro perspective or as all of learning from a macro perspective (Govender Mudzamiri, 2022). (Campbell-Phillips, 2020) The child's mother tongue serves as their first language and the dialect used in the community (Angelo et al., 2019). It can also be thought of as the primary language of interaction or the language that a child has developed since birth. This kind of instruction reflects a society with a consistent syntax where the instructor speaks the mother tongue, and all of the available resources are in that language as well. Additionally, while mother tongue education covers the learner's fundamental linguistic competency, it instills one's identity and culture (Opiniano et al., 2022; Ngugi, 2018). In essence, the program's execution is essential since it refines the students' capacity to pick up and study the native tongue of the area. Because they are articulate, the learners pick things up more
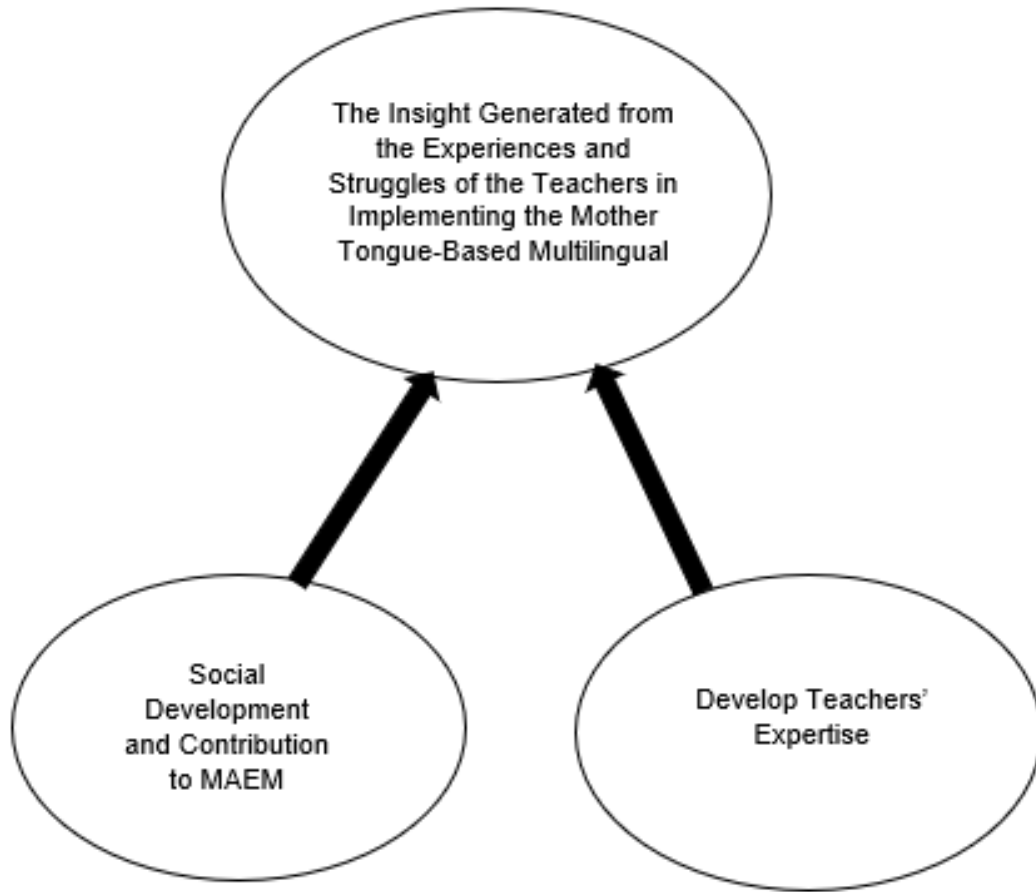
Fig. 5. Educational management Insight generated from the experiences and struggles of the teachers in implementing the mother tongue-based multilingual education

quickly and effectively. The MTB-MLE program sought to enhance students' foundational skills, produce more capable citizens, and get graduates ready for both professional advancement and lifetime learning (Apolonio, 2022). The program's goal is for students to attain academic achievement while simultaneously becoming proficient in two languages and one culture (Benson Kosonen, 2021; Heugh and Mohamed, 2020). Perez (2019) outlined the factors that should be taken into account while developing effective policies and providing training on curriculum design, teaching methods, and strategies. Different Filipino populations appear to encounter issues in schools while implementing the curriculum. These issues include a lack of teaching and learning resources, a shortage of printed materials with mother-tongue instructions, a lack of jargon, and a lack of professional development opportunities for educators at the elementary and secondary education levels (Caldas, 2019). Figure 5 shows the insight generated from the teachers' experiences and struggles in implementing the mother Tongue-Based Multilingual and the emergence of the two themes: Social Development and developing teachers' Expertise.

4. Implications and Future Directions

This chapter presents a brief overview of the study, followed by implications based on its findings and future directions in the field of teachers' experiences in implementing mother-tongue-based multilingual education.

4.1. Findings—The study aims to explore teachers' experiences in implementing MTB-MLE in their teaching. Through their experiences and feelings, we generate new knowledge for everyone who wants to understand teachers' journeys in implementing MTB-MLE. The data were gathered to examine and give meaningful ideas to generate more helpful knowledge that would impact teachers' professional lives in delivering quality education to our future generation. The changes in the teaching and learning process brought about by implementing MTB-MLE in the eyes and minds of elementary school teachers are essential in the learning progress of K-3 learners. In this era of the literacy gap, teachers are experiencing challenges in learning delivery. The role of teachers is challenged in providing quality education despite its limitations. Ten (10) elementary school teachers were interviewed. In conclusion, the implementation of MTB-MLE posed challenges to K-3 teachers. The burden in delivering the curriculum was due to the lack of training. Moreover, teachers should be fluent in the mother tongue in the classroom. Likewise, Training and seminars are essential for teachers teaching multilingual learners because they need to be oriented and guided on handling learners with different languages. Seminars and training also allow the teachers to learn from and interact with the different participants. The analysis revealed that emerging themes of the K- -teachers in coping with the challenges in implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education are as follows: positive support from teachers and stakeholders, providing appropriate activities and assessment and building self-confidence. This means that teachers have asked for help from other co-teachers who are already much more experienced. Implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education made teachers employ various strategies to deal with their difficulties. The respondents assist teachers in improving the activities and assessment in teaching using the mother tongue. Students can easily understand and retain lessons taught in their mother tongue, thus making them more productive not only on a personal scale but in a broader scope—children whose first language is not used at school. Lastly, the educational management insights drawn from elementary school teachers' experiences in implementing the mother tongue-based multilingual education in teaching are as follows: promoting a friendly learning environment, building self-confidence, and capacitating teachers on using the mother tongue. This further explains that experiences during the early years in school can have significant influences on the learners' outlook on studies, careers, and life. Promoting a friendly teaching-learning environment must be an important task for teachers. The meaningful lessons brought by understanding concepts in the mother tongue empowered the pupils to develop self-confidence and participate more actively in class work. The variation of lesson presentation does not conceal the similarities. Teachers are essential to the successful implementation of MTB-MLE. They play a key role in determining the extent to which language policies are implemented. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that they are qualified and trained to teach. This section entails the qualifications and training of the teachers in the MTBMLE program among the five selected Southeast Asian countries based on the available documents.

4.2. Implications—Incorporating the mother tongue in teaching can profoundly impact language learning and understanding. It helps students connect with their cultural roots, develop a sense of identity, and improve their language skills. This approach not only helps students understand the subject matter better but also helps them grasp the language they are trying to learn. It also helps develop a sense of pride in one's language and culture, which is essential for personal identity. Students taught using their mother tongue performed better than those taught in a second language. The students were more engaged in learning, had better comprehension, and could apply concepts to real-world situations. Using mother tongue-based instruction in early childhood education has significantly improved literacy rates. Students who were taught in their mother tongue were more likely to continue their education and have better outcomes in their academic performance. Moreover, it is essential to create an environment that encourages multilingualism. Schools and educational institutions should focus on promoting learning multiple languages, and employers should encourage employees to learn new languages to improve their communication skills.

4.3. Future Directions—While the core themes were found essential to the teachers' lived experiences in implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education, teachers should formulate appropriate plans and implement adequate strategies to meet the demands of the teaching and learning process for effective implementation. They should be more flexible in monitoring the implementation of mother tongue-based multilingual education in the classes of primary grade learners, with due consideration to their language at home. Specific policies may also be created to maximize the learner's participation in communication using their first language. The teachers should use this study as an appropriate baseline for the enhancement plan. Learners should be given time to adjust and cope with the transition brought about by the policy. Future researchers should consider some other aspects of the implementation of mother tongue-based multilingual education not covered in this research for a better comparison of the phenomenon being explored.

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