

Empowering Educators: Exploration of Junior High School Teachers Journey to Commitment

Arian Grace F. Betinol

Abstract. This qualitative research explored the lived experiences of junior high school teachers in their journey toward professional commitment within the context of the changing educational setting. Employing a phenomenological approach, the study sought to capture the personal narratives, and internal reflections of nine public school teachers from a junior high school setting. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, the study uncovered core dimensions that influence and sustain their professional commitment, including intrinsic motivation, school culture, mentorship experiences, and the positive impact they have on student learning and development. Thematic analysis uncovered a multifaceted interaction regarding the difficulties encountered by educators such as role strain, policy fatigue, and administrative workload, but also highlighted transformative experiences that fostered resilience, purpose, and renewed dedication. Emerging themes were collegial support structures, professional development, and the emotional and psychological advantages of teaching, including student development and appreciation. The research supports educational policies and initiatives that empower teachers by fostering autonomy, providing sufficient resources, honoring their contributions, and supporting their full being. In conclusion, the research indicates that cultivating a comprehensive and compassionate understanding of teachers' workforce.

KEY WORDS

1. Teacher commitment 2. professional development 3. teacher motivation

Date Received: April 05, 2025 — Date Reviewed: May 15, 2025 — Date Published: June 18, 2025

1. Introduction

One of the major challenges in education today is maintaining a high level of commitment among teachers in the field. While teachers play a critical role in shaping future generations, a growing number of teachers are experiencing a decline in their commitment to the teaching profession. The constantly shifting educational context, with its evolving curricula, policies, and increasing learners' needs, intensifies the challenges teachers face, especially the junior high school teachers', making it even more difficult to strengthen and sustain their commitment to

the profession. In the USA, the education field has seen a troubling trend of declining teacher commitment, raising concerns about its impact on educational quality. This shift poses a serious threat to learners' outcomes and deserves closer analysis. Over half of educators in the United States contemplate departing from their profession, citing reasons such as insufficient compensation, overwhelming workloads, and lack of adequate support published by Darling-Hammond and Sykes, (2019).

In Scotland, the decline in commitment man-

ifests in various ways like teacher absenteeism is on the rise, the teacher's sense of disengagement that saturate classrooms, and diminishing enthusiasm and passion that affected the quality of instruction. Likewise, those teachers whose commitment to their teaching profession is unsteady, will perform poorly in the classroom as seen by their frequent absences and failure to meet deadlines (Ferguson, 2019). In Turkey, Hansen and Kjeldsen (2019), reported that lack of commitment among secondary school teachers in urban area resulted in reduced enthusiasm, less effective classroom management, and diminished student-teacher relationships. When teachers lack commitment, they may be less inclined to participate in professional learning opportunities, which can limit their growth and ability to implement best practices and can ultimately hinder their effectiveness as educators. In the Philippines, particularly in Metro Manila, in the article of Baloran et al., (2020) stated that a troubling trend regarding the decrease in teacher commitment, which poses a serious threat to the country's future and necessitates urgent attention. A survey indicated that twenty-two percent of Filipino teachers are contemplating leaving the profession, and forty-seven percent of Filipino teachers experience frequent emotional exhaustion, leading some to change their career path. Kiral (2020) emphasized that teacher commitment was severely lacking in the province of Cebu, as evidenced by high rates of absenteeism, lateness, delays in grading student work, and part-time teaching or tutoring to supplement their income and meet basic needs. Some teachers even take on part-time work during weekends or at night after their regular teaching hours, leading to poor instructional quality. In the province of Negros Occidental, Ebuenga-Amora (2020) highlighted the

severe impact of teachers' personal struggles on their commitment to students' education and overall well-being. As they navigate the pressure of adapting to drastic curricular changes, many teachers find it increasingly difficult to balance these demands. This has resulted in significant challenges, making it harder for them to adjust teaching activities while striving to maintain high-quality learning experiences for their learners. In Davao del Norte, the issue of teacher commitment is deeply rooted in a range of challenges that significantly impact educators' ability to stay motivated and dedicated to their profession. The overwhelming demands placed on teachers, particularly those related to administrative responsibilities and organizational processes, have a profound effect on their enthusiasm and energy levels. As a result, many teachers find it increasingly difficult to maintain a strong commitment to their teaching roles, which in turn compromises the quality of education they provide and the overall learning experience for their learners. This persistent struggle reflects a broader issue that needs urgent attention in the local context. Recognizing the critical need for a deeper understanding of teachers' empowerment and its impact on commitment, the researcher identified a significant gap of this topic, and a study on the empowerment of public secondary school teachers through a phenomenological approach, especially within the context of Davao del Norte Division, is not yet explored. This gap, coupled with the urgent need to address challenges teachers face in this region, motivated the researcher to take the initiative and conduct this study, aiming to provide valuable insights that could help enhance teacher commitment and the overall educational quality.

1.1. Purpose of the Study—The main purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore teachers' experiences of empowerment in relation to their commitment to teaching. The findings will contribute to the existing knowledge on empowerment and teacher commitment, providing a

foundation for developing policies, recommendations, and research-based programs that nurture teacher commitment. This study aims to understand how junior high school teachers perceive empowerment as it relates to their commitment to teaching. Specifically, the study aims to draw significant information from the participants in terms of the experiences on teacher empowerment towards commitment as drawn from the findings of the study that will be conducted in Braulio E. Dujali District, Davao del Norte Division.

1.2. Research Questions—This study will be conducted to explore the experiences of teacher empowerment towards commitment. The direction of this study will be set by the following specific research questions:

- (1) What experiences that empower Junior High School teachers?
- (2) What challenges encountered teachers' empowerment to commitment?
- (3) What educational values can be drawn from the study?

1.3. Definition of Terms—Teachers

Teachers benefit from this study by gaining insights into strategies that enhance their sense of empowerment, leading to greater commitment in their teaching practices. Through this study, teachers strengthen partnership with school leaders and stakeholders through effective communication and collaboration that ultimately enrich their educational experiences and

commitment to teaching.

School Administrators

This study provides school administrators with valuable insights to nurture a supportive environment that encourages teacher empowerment, promoting collaboration between teachers and administration. It can also guide them in implementing initiatives that align with the school's mission to strengthen teacher commitment and improve student outcomes.

1.4. Significant of the Study—Teachers and school administrators would benefit from this study since it provides insightful information on the elements that affect professional

commitment and teacher empowerment. By emphasizing supporting methods and surroundings, the findings can help instructors feel more empowered, motivated, and engaged in the teaching profession.

1.5. Theoretical Lens—This study is anchored on the Commitment Theory by Stryker (1968). The theory emphasized that commitment intensifies when one benefits materially through rewards such as money, labor, goods, favors, or prestige. The commitment theory of Stryker conferred the commitment of a specific individual concerning the shared relationship between self and society and their linked effect on behavior. Thus, teacher commitment is related to the strength of inter-connectedness with others while in a particular role identity: Commitment is determined by the value of giving

up meaningful relations to others should alternatively courses of action be pursued. Teacher commitment relies on reciprocally. Social structure is based on the different organizations, just like in the educational organization wherein the commitment of teachers is reciprocated on the benefits, salaries, etc., and the caring school leadership of their superiors and empowerment, therefore begets commitment from teachers. Also, the study is supported by Psychological Empowerment Theory by Spreitzer (1995). Spreitzer's Psychological Empowerment Theory imparts a wide-ranging framework for un-

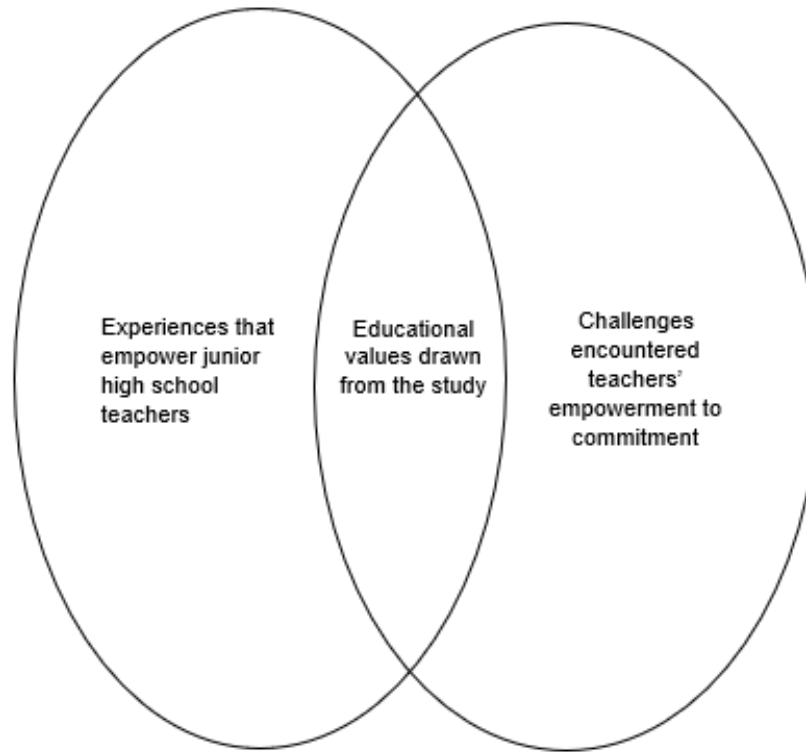


Fig. 1. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

derstanding how individuals experience and perceive empowerment in the workplace. The theory is centered on the idea that teachers feel psychologically empowered when they find their work meaningful, believe in their competence to perform tasks effectively, have a sense of autonomy and self-determination in their roles, and perceive that their efforts have a substantial effect on the overall outcomes. In an educational institution, the theory holds relevance for school administrators aiming to create an empowering environment for teachers. Leaders who recognize and support the meaningfulness of teachers' work, provide opportunities for professional development to enhance competence, encourage autonomy in making firm decisions, and ac-

knowledge the impact of Teachers on students' lives contribute to a psychologically empowering atmosphere. Educational leaders through teacher empowerment can promote teacher engagement, job satisfaction, and a sense of fulfillment, ultimately contributing to a positive and thriving educational community of committed teachers. As presented in the conceptual framework labeled as Figure 1, there were two interconnected variables. These variables are the experiences that enhance junior high school teachers' commitment; empowerment practices that strengthen the commitment of junior high school teachers; and educational values drawn from the study.

2. Methodology

This chapter of the study presented the method, research participants, data collection, role of the researcher, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study and the ethical consideration. Exploring facts and knowledge in this study necessitates the consequent design and implementation as

elaborated in this chapter.

2.1. Philosophical Assumptions—The philosophical foundations of this study establish the basis for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data in relation to how educators cultivate a sense of commitment in their profession. These foundational principles shape the conclusions and choices made throughout the research process, ensuring coherence and depth. These guiding beliefs, which vary in nature, are crucial in conducting systematic and meaningful research, beginning with the selection of the research topic and aligning with a specific research paradigm. The paradigm originates from Greek and Latin, meaning a model or example that influences actions. Essentially, a paradigm represents the adoption of a particular perspective or worldview. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define a research paradigm as a basic set of beliefs that guide action, encompassing the researcher's fundamental assumptions. In the context of studying how educators develop professional commitment, these philosophical assumptions and paradigms shape how the research explored and understood teachers' experiences, emphasizing their professional growth, instructional practices, and adaptation to institutional expectations. These philosophical assumptions are pivotal in understanding how educators foster commitment in their roles. They influence the researcher's perspective on how professional engagement and dedication should be interpreted, implemented, and evaluated. For instance, a constructivist paradigm may be applied, emphasizing how teachers' prior experiences and interactions with their educational environment shape their sense of commitment. Meanwhile, a pragmatic paradigm could focus on practical strategies that enhance teacher engagement and professional fulfillment in real-world educational settings. The choice of paradigm directly impacted the research methodology and data interpretation, ensuring that the study aligns

with a coherent perspective on professional dedication, educator empowerment, and career longevity. Ontology examined the nature of reality as perceived within the research context. According to Creswell (2020), reality is subjective and varies depending on individual perspectives. For qualitative researchers, ontology recognizes that multiple realities exist such as those of the researcher, study participants, and readers interpreting the findings. In this study, the perspectives of educators regarding their professional commitment were explored through their lived experiences. The study delved into the challenges they encounter, the strategies they employed to sustain dedication, and the opportunities they perceive for strengthening their professional engagement. To ensure authenticity, I prioritized participants' voices through direct quotes and thematic analyses, capturing the diversity of viewpoints on professional commitment. Responses were carefully examined and coded to identify patterns and unique perspectives. Maintaining objectivity, the researcher avoids personal biases, ensuring that the study accurately represents teachers' experiences and interpretations of professional dedication.

Epistemology

Epistemology referred to the process of understanding how knowledge is constructed and validated by remaining closely connected to study participants to gather firsthand insights. Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasized that a narrative qualitative study focused on personal stories and lived experiences that uncover deeper meanings and interpretations. Through storytelling, individuals communicate their perspectives, allowing for a more profound exploration of human experiences. In this research, I employed a narrative approach alongside thematic analysis to identify key themes in how educators build and sustain professional com-

mitment. The study involved gathering insights from public junior high school teachers, specifically those in Braulio E. Dujali District, Davao del Norte Division, to understand their perceptions of career engagement and the factors influencing their professional motivation.

Axiology

This study highlighted the role of values in shaping the research process, particularly in understanding how personal and professional beliefs influence teachers' sense of commitment. According to Creswell (2020), values significantly impact research direction, and it is essential for the researcher to acknowledge and integrate both their own and the participants' viewpoints. In studying how educators develop professional commitment, I ensured that each participant's insights were treated with respect and integrity. Recognizing the deeply personal and value-driven nature of their responses, the researcher carefully interpreted and presented their experiences while staying true to their au-

thentic perspectives. I stayed conscious of my responsibilities as a researcher, upholding objectivity while respecting the participants' opinions and feelings. Every stage of the procedure, from data collection to analysis, was guided by ethical considerations to guarantee that the participants' faith in me was maintained throughout the study. Rhetoric Rhetoric in qualitative research focused on accurately representing the realities experienced by participants. This approach ensured objectivity by faithfully presenting teachers' insights and reflections. By adopting a personal and descriptive narrative style, the study captured the nuanced experiences of educators as they navigate their professional journey. In this research, I utilized to effectively convey the lived experiences of teachers in developing and sustaining commitment to their profession. This rhetorical approach ensured an authentic and transparent representation of their challenges, motivations, and strategies for long-term engagement.

2.2. *Qualitative Assumptions*—Methodology is a flexible and responsive approach that helped researchers explore key questions and subject matter, while methods refer to the specific procedures used for data collection (Schwandt and Gates, 2017). In this study, the experiences of junior high school teachers in Braulio E. Dujali District, Davao del Norte Division were examined through their narratives on

professional commitment. By focusing on educators' perspectives, the study employed qualitative research methods that uncover deeper meanings behind teachers' career engagement. As noted by Schwandt and Gates (2017), qualitative research is particularly useful in exploring personal experiences, motivations, and professional aspirations, allowing for a richer understanding of the cultural and institutional influences on teacher dedication.

2.3. *Design and Procedure*—This research adopted a narrative research approach that explored how educators make sense of their professional journeys. The study captured teachers' personal reflections and experiences, providing a detailed understanding of the factors that shape their commitment to teaching. Nar-

rative research focused on how individuals construct meaning through storytelling, emphasizing their lived experiences, identities, and professional values. Typically involving a small number of participants, this method allowed for an in-depth exploration of unique perspectives within a specific social, cultural, and institutional context (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

2.4. Research Participants—Qualitative analyses typically require a smaller sample size than the quantitative analyses. Qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to obtain feedback for most or all perceptions. Obtaining most or all the perceptions 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. Purposive sampling was employed in identifying participants for this study. Through purposive sampling, a non-probability sample was selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. Purposively, the researcher will select nine junior high school teachers, in which three

junior high school teachers were purposefully selected from different national high schools in Braulio E. Dujali District, Division of Davao del Norte for the in-depth-interview. A total of nine junior high school teachers were invited as participants. The Inclusion criteria considered were as follows: currently a permanent teacher for 3 years or more in a national high school of Braulio E. Dujali District, Division of Davao del Norte. The results were used to identify the emerging themes and patterns or responses based on their lived experiences. The researcher utilized the purposive sampling design since the participants were chosen based on the criteria or purpose of the study (Creswell, 2020). It is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling. The selection of the participants was purposefully done to ensure that the findings were authentic.

2.5. Ethical Considerations—Ethical considerations are crucial in shaping the design and implementation of this research study, particularly when working with teachers in the context of Davao del Norte. As a researcher, it is essential to navigate ethical concerns with sensitivity and respect for the participants' perspectives and experiences. Upholding fairness and ensuring transparency throughout the study promotes trust and safeguards the integrity of the research process. By adhering to high ethical standards, I ensure the accurate representation of teachers' views, preventing any misinterpretation or bias that could distort the findings, while fostering an environment of mutual respect and confidence in the study's outcomes.

Social Value This study holds significant ethical social value as it aimed to highlight the experiences of teachers, ultimately guiding the development of policies that foster a more supportive and sustainable work environment. By focusing on teacher commitment, the study contributed to creating strategies that enhance edu-

cators' job satisfaction, retention, and long-term career fulfillment, benefiting both teachers and students. Through this, the research aligned with the broader social responsibility of ensuring that teachers are empowered and valued, which in turn will positively impact the overall educational system.

Informed Consent In conducting this study, I prioritized the Treaty Principle of Participation, ensuring the voluntary and informed involvement of junior high school teachers. They were thoroughly briefed on the purpose of the study, their role, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Each teacher was provided with an informed consent form that outlines the study's goals, expectations, and their rights as participants. They were asked to sign an acknowledgment, confirming their willingness to participate. This process ensured transparency and foster trust, which was essential for maintaining ethical standards and integrity throughout the phenomenological research.

Vulnerability of Research Participants The

research participants were the junior high school teachers who have experienced empowerment and possess valuable insights into their experiences and challenges as empowered educators in relation to commitment. While these participants are mature and professional, I remained mindful of their vulnerability in sharing personal experiences. I emphasized that participants are welcome to reach out for any questions or clarifications throughout the study. Recognizing the sensitivity of the information shared, I handled all interactions with utmost respect and care, ensuring that the voices of the participants are valued and their perspectives treated with integrity.

Risks, Benefits, and Safety The study was conducted in a manner that ensures participants willingly join the study, free from any coercion or undue influence. I provided contact details for participants to reach out with any questions or concerns about the study, ensuring open communication. Interviews were scheduled at times convenient for the teachers and conducted in a safe and comfortable environment. The study prioritized the Treaty Principle of Protection, safeguarding participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality while minimizing potential risks. I took proactive steps to mitigate risks and will ensure that the benefits of the study, including the valuable insights participants provide, are clearly communicated. Identifiable information was safeguarded using pseudonyms, ensuring full confidentiality and prioritizing the safety of participants throughout the research process. My top goal was to establish a polite, comfortable space where participants could freely share their stories with confidence that their data would be treated with the highest confidentiality and care.

Privacy and Confidentiality of Information I strictly adhere to the Data Privacy Act of 2002, ensuring that the privacy and confidentiality of participants' information are fully protected. All personal details and data shared during the

interviews were kept confidential, with information coded to prevent any identifiable links. I implemented all necessary precautions to safeguard against the disclosure of any identifiable information. Throughout the research process, printed materials and findings were handled in a way that ensures the anonymity of data sources, always prioritizing the confidentiality of participants' information. I stayed dedicated to following ethical guidelines and making sure that participants felt secure, appreciated, and respected when sharing their stories during the entire research process.

Transparency The findings of this study were accessible to participants and school administrators and was stored in electronic formats that can be requested by the participants. This transparency ensured that teachers and stakeholders are aware of the study's contributions to their professional development. This study on teacher empowerment toward commitment provides valuable insights into enhancing educators' professional growth, motivation, and long-term dedication, ultimately leading to improved teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

Participant Withdrawal and Data Verification Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time before the completion of data collection. They also could review and amend their interview transcripts to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the information they provided. I employed pseudonyms and modified identifying details in the data analysis and reporting process to protect the identities of the participants. This guaranteed the confidentiality and untraceability of their personal information. While upholding my ethical obligation to protect their confidentiality during the study, I took particular care to accurately portray their experiences. **Qualification of the Researcher** The researcher is well-qualified to conduct this study, having completed the necessary academic requirements and passed comprehensive exam-

inations. My qualifications ensure the study is conducted with the highest ethical standards. My researcher's emotional, physical, and financial capacity has been assessed, ensuring the study's success and completion within the proposed time frame. The guidance of the research advisor ensured that the study was completed successfully.

Adequacy of Facilities I have access to the necessary resources and support to complete this study on time. Adequate facilities and resources, including advice from the technical committee, ensured the study's successful completion. I have secured funding and materials to support the research throughout its phases, ensuring smooth execution and analysis.

Community Involvement I am committed to respecting local traditions, cultures, and view-

points in the study, acknowledging the importance of these values in rural educational settings. The study was conducted without any deceit or misrepresentation, and participants were treated with respect and integrity. I valued the active participation of the teachers and aims to ensure their voices are heard and respected.

Plagiarism and Fabrication I upheld academic honesty by properly citing sources and avoiding plagiarism. Any external work used was clearly referenced to acknowledge its original authorship. I was committed to ensuring the integrity of the study by avoiding any intentional misrepresentation or fabrication of data. The research findings were based solely on the accurate representation of participants' experiences and perspectives.

2.6. Role of the Researcher—My responsibility was to uncover, transfer, and undertake knowledge for the benefit of educational institutions. To achieve this, I assumed the following roles throughout the course of the study: **Facilitator and Promoter of Unbiased Research** I conducted interviews with the participants and guided them throughout the process. I interpreted their ideas and responses based on existing literature and related studies, rather than relying on my own knowledge, thoughts, or feelings, to avoid the intrusion of bias.

Expert in Qualitative Method I implemented the narrative qualitative method with fidelity. To do so, I assessed myself and sought assistance from my research adviser and other research professionals. This helped me demonstrate competence in explaining the study without biasing the participants, properly conducting the interviews in accordance with the research design, making appropriate field observations, selecting relevant artifacts, images, and journal excerpts, and accurately employing Thematic Content Analysis.

Collector and Keeper of Data I ensured the use of various methods to record what was said and done during the interviews, such as handwritten notes and audio and/or video recordings. The recordings were transcribed verbatim before beginning data analysis. As I handled sensitive information, I properly secured all data, recognizing my primary responsibility to safeguard both the participants and their data. I clearly articulated the mechanisms for data protection to participants, and these procedures were reviewed and approved by the relevant research ethics review board before the research commenced.

Analyst of Data I examined the phenomenon or problem from the participants' perspectives by interpreting the data, transcribing and verifying responses, reading between the lines, and conducting coding and theming. I assured that the findings accurately reflected the participants' experiences and that their voices were authentically represented.

Organizer and Presenter of Data I presented the research problem and the supporting litera-

ture and studies. The findings of the study were also presented by research questions, with the results organized under specific themes to illustrate how each research question was addressed.

2.7. Data Collection—The following were the step-by-step process of gathering the data needed. First, I secured an endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School of Rizal Memorial Colleges. This endorsement was one of the documents required for submission to the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent in requesting permission to conduct the study. After securing approval from the SDS, I sought permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao del Norte Division to conduct the study in the identified school. A formal letter was submitted, along with Chapters 1 and 2 of the research and the research instrument. These documents outlined the objectives of the study and identified the participants, and I waited for a response before proceeding. Upon receiving approval from the Schools Division Superintendent, I sent a letter to the Public Schools District Supervisor of Braulio E. Dujali District and to the school principals of the targeted public junior high schools. The letter explained

Furthermore, I outlined the future directions and implications of the study for the improvement of educational policies and practices.

the nature of the study and the research activities to be conducted in the schools. I obtained informed consent from the participants. They were formally oriented towards the purpose of the study and the process they would go through as participants. In-depth interviews were conducted using a structured interview guide. I documented participants' profiles, took field notes, and recorded the conversations using a sound recorder to ensure accuracy in transcription. During the interviews, I actively listened and responded appropriately. The participants' responses were transcribed precisely by reviewing the recordings. Any responses delivered in the vernacular were translated into English. Once the transcription was complete, I categorized and coded the data. The themes were extracted, and individual data were compared. If needed, additional information was gathered and integrated with the existing data. Patterns and trends across participants' responses were then identified and analyzed.

2.8. Data Analysis—In this study, thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the gathered data. The researcher analyzed the answers of the participants from the conducted interviews with the use of Creswell's Model specifically the identifying of themes approach. According to Creswell (2020) themes in qualitative research are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database. Familiarization with the data is common to all forms of qualitative analysis, the researcher immersed herself in, and became intimately familiar with, their data; reading and re-reading the data and noting any initial analytic observations. I kept

reflective notes and memos throughout the process to capture emerging insights and potential connections between data segments. This stage was crucial in laying the groundwork for coding and the development of meaningful and accurate themes grounded in the participants' narratives.

Coding

It is also a common element of many approaches to qualitative analysis, generating pithy labels for important features of the data of relevance to the broad research question guiding the analysis. Coding is not simply a method of data reduction; it is also an analytic process, so

codes capture both a semantic and conceptual reading of the data. The researcher coded every data item and ended this phase by collating all their codes and relevant data extracts.

Searching for Themes

Is coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question. I ended this phase by collating all the coded data relevant to each theme.

Reviewing Themes

I reflected on whether the themes tell a convincing and compelling story about the data and began to define the nature of each indi-

vidual theme, and the relationship between the themes. For these, Thematic Content Analysis was employed by the researcher. Thematic Content Analysis is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data in which a detailed analysis of each theme will be made by identifying the 'essence' of each theme and constructing a concise, punchy and informative name for each theme. Writing-up Involves weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts to tell the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data and contextualizing it in relation to existing literature.

2.9. Framework of Analysis—The framework analysis of this research was flexible to allow the researcher to either collect all the data and then analyze it or do data analysis during the collection process. In the analysis stage the gathered data is sifted, charted, and sorted in accordance with key issues and themes. This study employed qualitative research methods. Rigorous and systematic steps were observed in analyzing the information gathered from the teacher-participants. Data will be analyzed following the steps outlined by O'Connor and Gibson (2003) on qualitative data analysis found in the next page: Finding and Organizing Ideas and Concepts I carefully read the transcripts during the data analysis process to find particular words, phrases, or concepts that kept coming up in participant responses. These recurrent themes were identified because they frequently represented important ideas or common experiences. In order to start developing a structured understanding of the data, I then grouped related

concepts into preliminary codes or categories. The foundation for creating more comprehensive themes that faithfully captured the essential meanings in the data was established by this methodical approach, which also assisted in distilling the essence of the participants' ideas. Building Over-Arching Themes in the Data Each of the response categories has one or more associated themes that give a deeper meaning to the data. Different categories can collapse under one main over-arching theme. Ensuring Reliability and Validity in the Data Analysis and in the Findings Findings are more dependable when they can be confirmed from several independent sources. Their validity is enhanced when they are confirmed by more than one "instrument" measuring the same thing. The two other steps were done by the researcher in this study, and they are Writing which is drafting the output of the data analysis by weaving story of the narratives and literatures and presentation, the thematic and comprehensive presentation of output in an artistic graphs and illustrations.

2.10. Trustworthiness of the Study—Trustworthiness referred to the establishment of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. In this qualitative study, trustwor-

thiness was of utmost importance because the results and findings heavily relied on how the research process was conducted by the researcher. The worth of a research study was determined

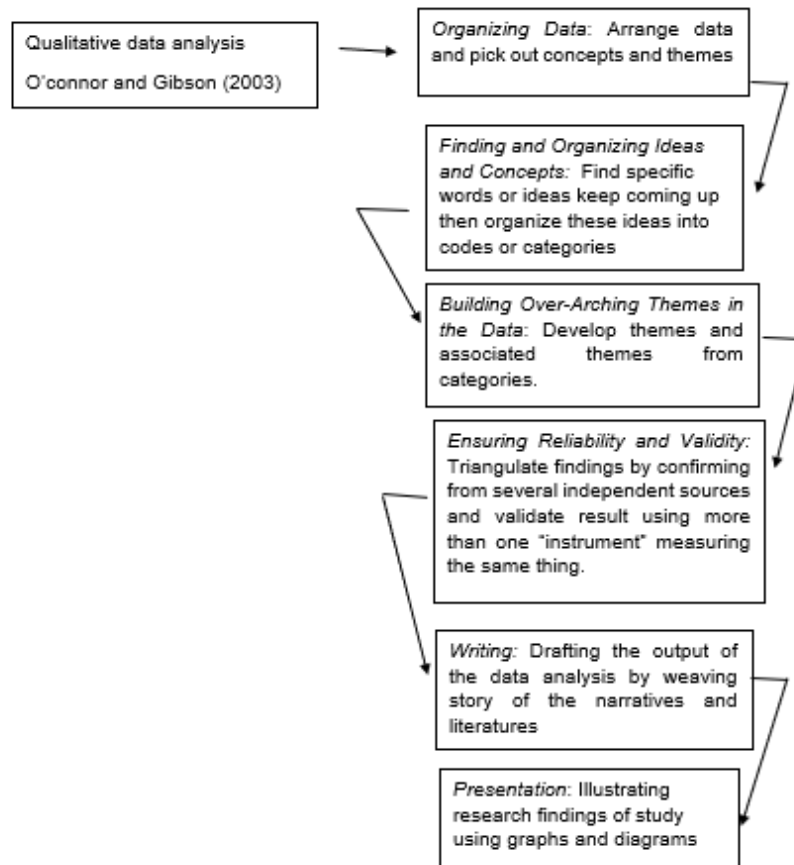


Fig. 2. Analytical Framework of the Study)

by its trustworthiness. Due to the nature of qualitative research, honesty in presenting all data and details was essential. Trustworthiness made the researcher's study worthy of being read, shared, and taken pride in. Credibility Credibility described the confidence that could be placed in the truthfulness of the research study's findings. I believed that being honest in all aspects of the research process was vital to achieving meaningful success. There had been no derogatory records or administrative concerns that could undermine the researcher's integrity. As stated by Lincoln and Guba (2000), credibility involved internal consistency ensuring rigor in the research process and clearly communicating how that rigor was maintained. Transferability Transferability referred to the extent to which the findings of the research study could be applied to other contexts. In this study, those contexts included similar settings, populations, and phenomena. I had previously investigated factors influencing educators' engagement and extended that interest by exploring junior high school teachers' perspectives on their journey toward professional commitment. Gasson (2004) described transferability as the ability of readers to generalize findings to their own environments, addressing how broadly a theory could be applied across educational settings. Confirmability Confirmability referred to the level of neutrality maintained in the research findings. This meant that the conclusions drawn

from the study were based on participants' responses and not influenced by the researcher's personal biases or motivations. I ensured that interpretations did not skew the participants' narratives to fit a predetermined viewpoint. An audit trail was meticulously maintained to document each step in the data analysis process and to provide justifications for analytical decisions. This helped to confirm that the findings authentically represented the participants' voices. As Gasson (2004) emphasized, confirmability acknowledged that while research could not be entirely objective, transparency and accountability were critical. Dependability Dependability addressed whether the study could be repeated by other researchers and yield similar findings. In this study, detailed documentation was provided so that others could replicate the process and attain comparable results. An inquiry audit was used to establish dependability, requiring an external reviewer to examine the research procedures and data analysis for consistency. A well-organized database was used to support the information collected, allowing any changes or decisions made during the research process to be traced and verified. All data were securely stored for future reference. According to Gasson (2004), dependability required that the conduct of a study remain consistent over time, among researchers, and across different analysis methods.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter systematically presents and critically analyzes the findings of the study in alignment with its overarching objective. It offers an in-depth examination of the emergent themes derived from the participants' responses, grounded in the qualitative data collected. Furthermore, it includes a concise overview of the participants' profiles, with pseudonyms assigned to uphold ethical standards of confidentiality and anonymity. The findings discussed herein provide a substantive basis for interpreting the salient patterns, lived experiences, and perspectives articulated during the interviews.

3.1. Experiences that Empower Junior High School Teachers—Empowerment in educational settings encompasses the delegation of authority, promotion of professional autonomy, and meaningful involvement in decision-making processes. When teachers are empowered, they feel a sense of agency that enhances their professional identity and purpose. This empowerment translates into stronger emotional and intellectual investment in their roles, leading to greater levels of commitment to their schools and students. Teachers who perceive themselves as change agents are more likely to exhibit sustained engagement and innovation. Moreover, empowerment experiences contribute to a sense of ownership, which reinforces accountability and pride in one's work. As teachers experience success and affirmation through empowered roles, their intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction increase. Over time, these positive experiences build professional loyalty and reduce the likelihood of burnout or attrition. Therefore, empowerment acts not merely as a motivational tool, but as a foundational pillar for long-term commitment and professional stability in the teaching profession.

3.1.1. Empowerment as a Catalyst for Motivation and Dedication—Empowered teachers often exhibit higher levels of motivation due to the trust and responsibility vested in them by their superiors. When educators are granted autonomy over curriculum design, instructional strategies, and assessment methods, they are more engaged and passionate about their work. This autonomy allows for creativity, problem-solving, and a stronger alignment with personal teaching philosophies. Motivation increases as teachers feel their professional judgment is respected and supported. Dedication is further deepened when teachers perceive their work as meaningful and impactful, especially when their input influences school decisions. Empowerment affirms a teacher's value within the institution, encouraging long-term dedication

even in the face of challenges. This sense of professional respect cultivates a positive school culture and encourages teachers to go above and beyond in their duties. In essence, empowerment serves as a psychological anchor that nurtures sustained enthusiasm and commitment to the teaching profession. Jacobs (2019) emphasized that empowering experiences such as autonomy in decision-making and involvement in school initiatives increase teachers' sense of purpose. Empowerment enables educators to feel valued and integral to institutional development. These experiences contribute significantly to teacher confidence and job satisfaction, particularly in junior high school contexts. Also, Guskey (2019) underscores that empowerment is a crucial driver of intrinsic motivation among teachers. When teachers are entrusted with responsibilities and supported in their roles, it leads to deeper commitment to their profession. Empowered teachers are more likely to innovate and remain dedicated even amidst challenges. Empowerment, as described by Jacobs (2019), serves as a catalyst for motivation by enabling individuals to influence others and take meaningful action. In the context of schools, it involves principals acting as facilitators who entrust teachers with the authority to lead their own professional development. This shared leadership approach nurtures a culture of continuous learning, inspiring teachers to stay motivated and engaged in pursuing educational excellence.

3.1.2. The Role of Recognition, Support, and Growth Opportunities in Sustaining Commitment—Recognition validates a teacher's efforts and reinforces the value of their contributions to students and the school community. When teachers receive constructive feedback, public acknowledgment, or awards, it enhances their sense of worth and inspires continued effort. Consistent support from school leaders and colleagues ensures that teachers feel they are not alone in their challenges. These affirmations

promote a nurturing work environment that strengthens emotional resilience and commitment. Professional growth opportunities such as workshops, advanced degrees, or leadership roles that allow teachers to expand their skills and envision a progressive career path. Access to development resources not only enhances instructional quality but also signals institutional investment in teacher success. This investment, in turn, builds reciprocal loyalty, where teachers commit to giving their best to the school. Collectively, recognition, support, and growth function as vital dimensions of empowerment that help retain passionate and dedicated educators. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2019) highlighted that recognition and administrative support play a vital role in sustaining teacher morale and professional commitment. Teachers who are acknowledged and provided with growth opportunities tend to remain resilient and committed. These factors help build trust and a positive school climate. Hargreaves and O'Connor (2019) emphasized that sustained professional development plays a vital role in empowering teachers, reinforcing their commitment to the profession. They highlighted that empowered teacher, when recognized and supported, are more likely to cultivate positive and effective learning environments. This underscores the importance of providing ongoing recognition, support, and growth opportunities as key factors in maintaining teacher motivation and long-term commitment.

3.1.3. Maintaining Commitment Despite Empowerment Strains—Even within empowered environments, teachers may face stressors such as policy restrictions, workload imbalances, or a lack of follow-through on empowerment promises. These strains can diminish the enthusiasm initially sparked by empowerment if systemic barriers remain unaddressed. For example, being empowered in theory but unsupported in practice may lead to disillusionment or professional fatigue. Therefore, it's

crucial to align empowerment strategies with consistent and tangible institutional backing. Despite such unfavorable situations, committed teachers often draw on internal resilience and peer networks to sustain their engagement. Coping mechanisms like reflective practice, collaborative planning, and emotional regulation enable teachers to adapt and thrive. When empowered teachers overcome such strains, their sense of professional maturity and capacity for leadership grows stronger. The ability to maintain commitment through adversity highlights the depth of empowerment's influence and the importance of sustaining it over time. Collie (2021) observed that despite constraints like inadequate support and overwhelming workloads, many teachers maintain their professional dedication. The internal drive to serve students often outweighs systemic limitations. However, sustained commitment under pressure requires strong emotional regulation and self-efficacy.

3.1.4. Commitment as Emotional and Spiritual Anchoring—Commitment in the teaching profession goes beyond fulfilling instructional duties; it is deeply intertwined with the teacher's emotional and spiritual grounding. When teachers form meaningful connections with their students, the sense of responsibility becomes more personal and heartfelt. This emotional attachment strengthens a teacher's resolve to persevere despite challenges, as their motivation is fueled not merely by expectations, but by compassion and care. Such internal anchoring helps teachers find purpose and joy in their work, turning the classroom into a space of genuine transformation. Spiritually, many educators view their role as a calling rather than just a job, which enhances their sense of mission and integrity in teaching. This perspective encourages them to seek inner strength and moral guidance when navigating the complexities of education. Spiritual anchoring supports resilience, especially in moments of doubt or exhaustion, by reminding teachers of the deeper

value and meaning of their service. As a result, emotional and spiritual grounding fosters long-term commitment, sustaining teachers through the highs and lows of their professional journey. Ferguson (2019) describes commitment as deeply rooted in teachers' emotional and spiritual values. Their devotion to teaching transcends professional obligations, often becoming a form of service. This spiritual anchoring enables teachers to persist through emotional and structural adversities. Jakobsson's (2019) study revealed that empowerment positively shaped teachers' work by deepening their sense of connection to both the institution and their peers. This strengthened sense of belonging fostered collaboration and mutual support, helping teachers navigate the challenges that come with increased responsibilities. Despite potential strains, empowerment ultimately enhanced teacher motivation and engagement, enabling them to maintain commitment and deliver meaningful impact in their roles. Meyer

et al. (2019) emphasized that empowerment involves equipping individuals with the skills and autonomy needed to engage meaningfully in their work and influence their environment. In the context of teaching, empowering educators to take ownership fosters mutual respect, shared purpose, and collective decision-making. These elements cultivate a deeper emotional and spiritual connection to their roles, reinforcing teachers' commitment and sense of belonging within the school community. Empowerment serves as a powerful catalyst for enhancing teachers' motivation and dedication by giving them autonomy, professional voice, and opportunities to grow. When teachers are entrusted with decision-making, involved in leadership roles, or exposed to capacity-building programs, their sense of purpose is magnified. This boosts not only their self-efficacy but also encourages a proactive attitude toward continuous improvement.

Based on the figure presented, four key themes emerged from the participants' responses: empowerment as a catalyst for motivation and dedication, the role of recognition, support, and growth opportunities in sustaining commitment, maintaining commitment despite empowerment strains, and commitment as emotional and spiritual anchoring.

3.2. Challenges Encountered Teachers' Empowerment to Commitment—The data revealed that teachers' commitment is often challenged by the limitations in support, resources, and recognition provided within their educational environments. When empowerment lacks structural backing such as access to quality materials, professional guidance, or meaningful acknowledgment which can lead to frustration and emotional fatigue. Instead of feeling uplifted, teachers may feel isolated, overburdened, or undervalued, which weakens their dedication over

time. These constraints can diminish the effectiveness of empowerment efforts unless they are paired with sustainable, systemic support. Despite these difficulties, many teachers develop adaptive coping strategies to remain committed to their calling. Through collaboration, reflection, and a resilient mindset, they navigate challenges while continuing to strive for excellence. Teachers learn to grow through adversity by drawing strength from each struggle, learning from setbacks, and embracing the imperfections of the teaching profession. This acceptance allows them to focus on progress over perfection, making their commitment more enduring and meaningful even in the face of hardship.

3.2.1. Impact of Limited Support, Resources, and Recognition on Teacher Commitment—Teachers often struggle with inadequate institutional support, insufficient teaching resources, and a lack of professional recognition,

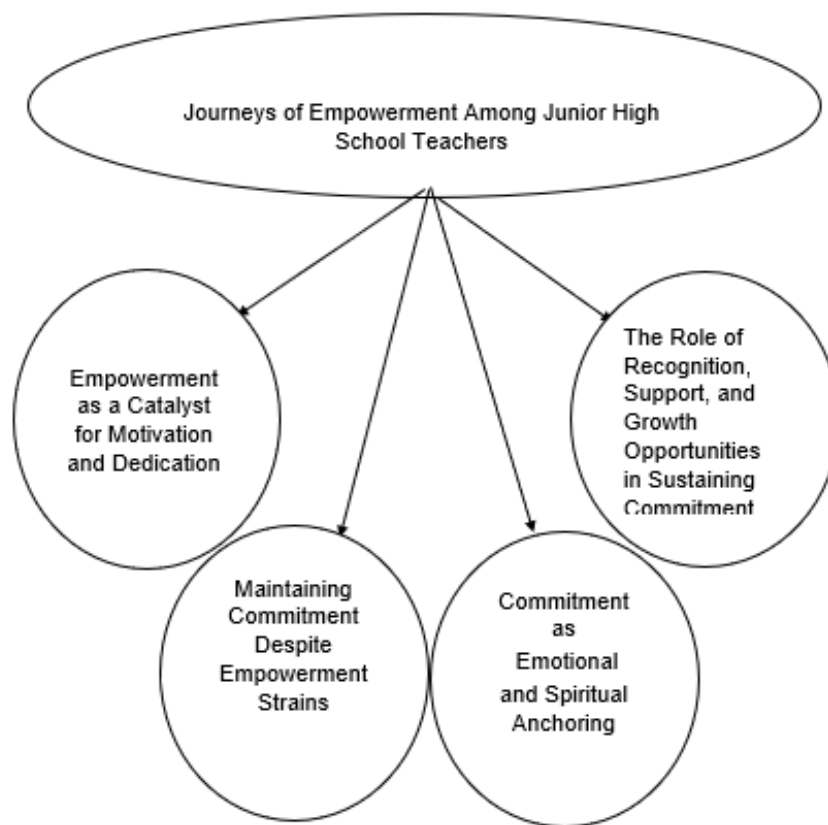


Fig. 3. Experiences that Empower Junior High School Teachers

all of which can erode morale. These obstacles not only hinder effective instruction but also create feelings of frustration and undervaluation. Without proper acknowledgment or tools, teachers may feel isolated and disconnected from their purpose. Such conditions can diminish motivation and threaten long-term commitment to the profession. Chang and Lee (2022) emphasized that teacher empowerment is significantly influenced by the availability of essential resources such as tools, technology, and instructional materials. When these supports are lacking, teachers may struggle to feel fully empowered, which can hinder their ability to deliver effective instruction and sustain their commitment. Their findings suggest that resource limitations not only affect teaching performance but also impact motivation and long-term professional dedication. Thompson and Miller (2023) outlined common challenges faced by educators, including bureaucratic constraints, limited support, and burnout. These issues hinder the empowerment process and can weaken long-term commitment. Addressing such challenges requires systemic change and policy support. Additionally, Patel (2021) argued that insufficient support structures, scarce teaching materials, and lack of recognition can significantly erode teacher commitment. When these needs are unmet, teachers often feel undervalued and overburdened. This leads to attrition or disengagement from their roles.

3.2.2. Adaptive Coping Strategies by Teachers in the Face of Challenges—In response to persistent challenges, many teachers develop coping strategies such as peer collaboration, self-initiative, and flexible problem-solving. These strategies help maintain classroom functionality and emotional well-being despite external pressures. Supportive relationships among colleagues often serve as a vital source of strength and shared learning. The ability to adapt ensures that teachers can maintain performance and commitment even under

less-than-ideal circumstances. Nguyen (2021) highlighted that empowered teachers develop adaptive coping mechanisms such as peer collaboration and reflective practices. These strategies help them manage stress and maintain motivation. Resilience is often fostered through professional learning communities and institutional support. Garcia et al. (2020) noted that a lack of institutional support, including limited resources, training, and administrative guidance, can significantly hinder teacher empowerment. In such unsupportive environments, teachers often experience feelings of isolation and inadequacy, making it challenging to fully engage in their professional growth. These conditions prompt educators to develop adaptive coping strategies to navigate obstacles while striving to maintain their motivation and effectiveness in the classroom.

3.2.3. Growth through Adversity—Facing and overcoming challenges fosters personal and professional growth in teachers, often building their resilience, patience, and appreciation for teamwork. Difficult situations become learning experiences that enhance teachers' capacity to manage stress and complexity. These lessons shape stronger educators who are more equipped to navigate future challenges. Ultimately, the ability to transform adversity into growth is central to sustaining long-term commitment and success in teaching. Moreover, Lee and Chang (2022) explain that professional growth often emerges from difficult teaching experiences. Teachers who face adversity develop stronger pedagogical and emotional competencies. This growth reinforces their long-term commitment and adaptability in dynamic school environments. Smith and Johnson (2020) emphasized that teachers' growth can be hindered when they lack autonomy in making decisions related to curriculum and instructional practices. In restrictive environments, their capacity to innovate and take ownership is limited, reducing their overall sense of empowerment.

However, through such adversity, teachers often seek alternative ways to assert agency and develop professionally, highlighting resilience as a key factor in their growth. Williams and Hayes (2020) found that collaboration plays a crucial role in fostering teacher empowerment and professional growth. In the absence of collaborative opportunities, teachers often face challenges alone, which can weaken their confidence and limit their ability to grow. Despite these setbacks, many educators develop resilience by seeking informal support networks and reflecting on their practice, allowing growth to emerge even in isolating circumstances. Participant 8 highlighted that the deep passion and commitment the individual has towards teaching and supporting students. Despite facing challenges, the sense of purpose and love for the learners drive their perseverance and dedication. The individual finds strength in the impact they can make in the lives of their students, which keeps them motivated, even during difficult times. Their enduring focus on their mission as a teacher underscores the importance of love for the profession and the learners. While participant 2 emphasized the importance of self-care and stress management, particularly through exercise, which is part of their routine as a P.E. major and RCY adviser. Building strong relationships with colleagues and seeking mentorship are also crucial in fostering a supportive work environment. These practices not only help in managing stress but also contribute to the overall growth and well-being of the individual. By prioritizing self-care and support from others, the person can sustain their energy and commitment in their professional life.

3.2.4. Acceptance of Imperfection—Acceptance of imperfection in the educational system is crucial for teachers as it fosters resilience and realistic expectations amid ongoing challenges. When educators acknowledge systemic flaws, they are more likely to focus on

what they can control, thus empowering themselves to remain committed despite adversity. This mindset supports continuous growth and encourages innovation, rather than frustration, in navigating institutional shortcomings. Ultimately, embracing imperfection can strengthen teacher empowerment and sustain their dedication to meaningful teaching and learning. Villanueva (2021) shares that teachers committed to their work often come to accept imperfections in their teaching journey. This acceptance fosters humility and continuous self-improvement. It also enhances their emotional resilience and realistic goal setting. Based on the figure presented, four key themes emerged from the participants' responses: the impact of limited support, resources, and recognition on teacher commitment, adaptive coping strategies by teachers in the face of challenges, growth through adversity, and acceptance of imperfection. The data revealed that Limited support, resources, and recognition can significantly hinder teachers' sense of empowerment, ultimately affecting their commitment to the profession. When teachers lack adequate support, whether in terms of materials, professional development, or acknowledgment, it can lead to feelings of isolation and burnout, diminishing their motivation to stay engaged in their work. In this context, teachers may struggle to adapt their teaching practices effectively, which can undermine their ability to foster an inspiring learning environment for their students. The absence of recognition further exacerbates this, as teachers may feel undervalued, leading to decreased job satisfaction and lower commitment levels. Despite these challenges, many teachers exhibit adaptive coping strategies, using adversity as a catalyst for growth and learning. Rather than succumbing to frustration, some teachers find ways to innovate within limited constraints, turning challenges into opportunities for creative problem-solving. This growth through adversity not only strengthens their teaching skills

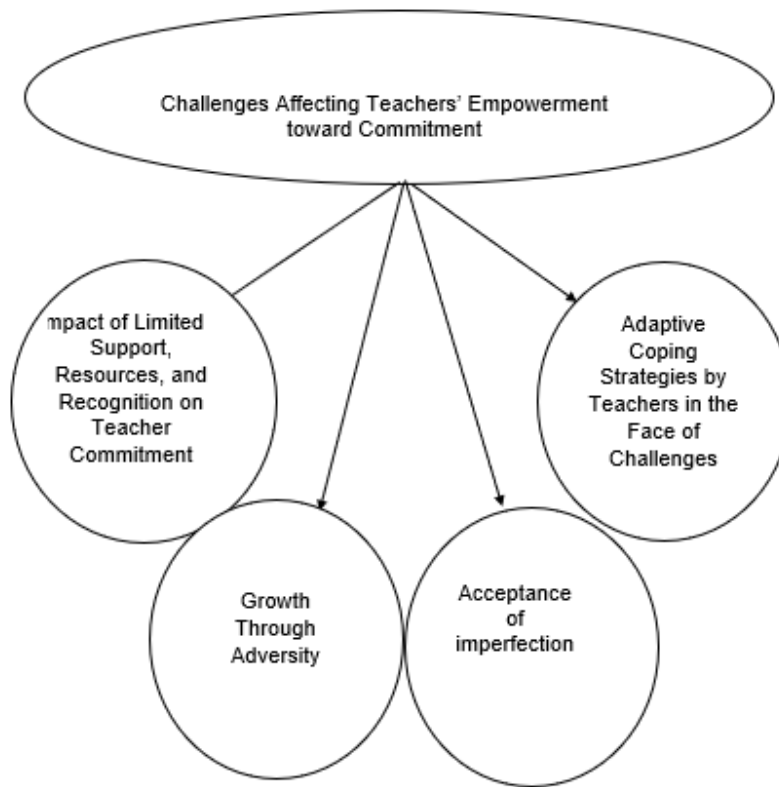


Fig. 4. Challenges Encountered Teachers' Empowerment to Commitment but also cultivates resilience, allowing them to better navigate future difficulties.

3.3. *Educational Values Drawn from the Study*—Positive student feedback, professional development experiences, building relationships with peers, and spiritual and emotional resilience collectively play crucial roles in fostering teacher commitment through empowerment. Positive feedback from students affirms teachers' efforts and strengthens their sense of purpose, motivating them to continue improving and investing in their practice. Professional development opportunities further enhance teachers' skills and knowledge, equipping them with the tools needed to navigate challenges with confidence and a growth mindset. When teachers are empowered through such feedback and development, they feel more capable and valued, which enhances their commitment to their students and the profession. Additionally, building relationships with peers offers emotional and

professional support, creating a sense of community that bolsters teachers' resilience. These relationships provide a platform for collaboration, shared learning, and mutual encouragement, reinforcing the belief that teachers are not isolated in their efforts but are part of a collective mission. Spiritual and emotional resilience also plays a significant role, as teachers who are grounded in their values and well-being are better equipped to handle stress and setbacks. Together, these elements contribute to a comprehensive framework of teacher empowerment that promotes enduring commitment, strengthens educational values, and sustains teachers' passion for fostering student growth. Taylor and Thompson (2021) emphasized that deeply held educational values such as service, dedication, and love for learning fuel teacher commitment. These values are often internalized through ex-

perience and institutional culture. They form the backbone of professional identity in teaching.

3.3.1. Positive Student Feedback—Positive student feedback reflects the direct impact of teaching on learners' development and engagement. When teachers receive positive feedback, it affirms their teaching strategies and encourages continuous improvement, fostering a sense of fulfillment in their profession. This feedback empowers educators by reinforcing their belief in their abilities and the significance of their work. Furthermore, consistent positive feedback enhances teacher motivation and commitment, driving them to maintain or elevate their efforts in the classroom. Johnson (2020) notes that positive feedback from students affirms teachers' efforts and boosts morale. Such feedback reinforces the relevance of their work. It also fosters emotional satisfaction and renewed energy in their instructional roles.

3.3.2. Professional Development Experiences—Professional development experiences play an essential role in empowering teachers by expanding their skills and knowledge, thus boosting their sense of competence. These experiences equip educators with new strategies and tools, making them more confident and effective in addressing diverse learner needs. As teachers feel more prepared and supported in their professional growth, they are more likely to exhibit long-term commitment to their roles. Additionally, professional development fosters a culture of continuous learning, encouraging teachers to stay innovative and invested in their practice. Nguyen (2021) found that professional development opportunities empower teachers to refine their skills and take on leadership roles. These experiences enhance their self-efficacy and motivation. Continuous learning supports sustained excellence in teaching practice.

3.3.3. Building Relationship with Peers—Building relationships with peers strengthens the sense of community and support among ed-

ucators, fostering an environment of collaboration and shared learning. Peer interactions allow for the exchange of ideas, resources, and best practices, which can enhance teaching effectiveness and job satisfaction. These connections create a supportive network that can help teachers navigate challenges and remain resilient in their profession. As teachers feel more connected and supported by their colleagues, their commitment to their work and the school community grows. Garcia et al., (2020) reported that strong collegial relationships contribute significantly to teacher empowerment and engagement. Peer support systems provide emotional refuge and instructional inspiration. Collaborative environments improve both morale and pedagogical outcomes.

3.3.4. Spiritual and Emotional Resilience—Spiritual and emotional resilience is a cornerstone of teacher empowerment, as it enables educators to cope with the stresses and demands of the profession. Teachers with strong emotional resilience can maintain their well-being while navigating the ups and downs of teaching, thereby avoiding burnout. Spiritual resilience, often rooted in personal values and purpose, provides teachers with a sense of direction and meaning in their work. Together, emotional and spiritual resilience help teachers stay committed, even in challenging circumstances, and continue to provide quality education for their learners. Ferguson (2019) emphasized that spiritual grounding and emotional intelligence help teachers persevere through institutional challenges. These inner resources offer strength during periods of stress and ambiguity. Resilience becomes a cornerstone for enduring commitment. Moreover, the response from participant 6 focuses on the teacher's journey in becoming empowered, learning the importance of being a lifelong learner, and continuously evolving in their profession. Through empowerment, the teacher recognizes that teaching is a collaborative endeavor, and that sharing ideas,

strategies, and experiences with colleagues is crucial to professional growth. The response also emphasizes the importance of creating a strong community within the school, where collective efforts among teachers, parents, and leadership can provide a supportive environment for both educators and students to succeed. This collaborative approach nurtures an atmosphere where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Spreitzer's (1995) Psychological Empowerment Theory offers a comprehensive lens for interpreting how teachers experience empowerment in their professional roles. This theory aligns closely with the study's findings, which revealed that teachers demonstrate stronger commitment when they find purpose in their work, feel competent in their teaching abilities, exercise autonomy in decision-making, and recognize the impact of their efforts on learner outcomes. The theory underscores the vital connection between psychological empowerment and sustained teacher commitment,

emphasizing how internal motivation and perceived influence drive professional dedication. Likewise, Stryker's (1968) Commitment Theory highlights that commitment deepens when individuals gain tangible or symbolic rewards, such as recognition, social esteem, or professional benefits. This perspective aligns with the study's findings, which suggest that teacher empowerment is strengthened when educators perceive their efforts as valued and rewarded within the school community. The theory supports the notion that a teacher's sustained commitment is influenced by the meaningful connection between personal identity, societal role, and the positive reinforcement they receive through empowerment. Based on the figure presented, four themes emerged from the responses of the participants with regards to educational values drawn from the study which were: positive student feedback, professional development experiences, building relationships with peers, and spiritual and emotional resilience.

4. Implications and Future Directions

In this chapter, I presented a comprehensive summary of the study by drawing on the emergent findings to explore both the implications and future directions related to teacher commitment. The primary aim of this research was to uncover the internal and external factors that shape junior high school teachers' professional commitment, the challenges they encounter in sustaining it, and the transformative insights gained through their lived experiences.

4.1. Findings—To address the research objectives, a qualitative phenomenological approach was employed, guided by Creswell's (2020) framework. Through open-ended interviews, participants were invited to share their authentic narratives, allowing a deep exploration of their emotional, professional, and contextual realities in their journey toward sustained commitment in teaching. Thematic analysis of their responses revealed several core themes. The lived experiences of teachers navigating their commitment journeys included emotional exhaustion, administrative pressures, and limited

institutional recognition. Despite these, their coping mechanisms emerged as rooted in personal resilience, faith and values alignment, collegial support, and a strong sense of vocation. The insights and realizations gained from their professional paths emphasized the need to nurture purpose-driven teaching, cultivate reflective practice, and build a school culture that values both the human and professional aspects of educators' lives.

4.2. Implications—The results of this study revealed that junior high school teachers' journey to commitment is deeply influenced by

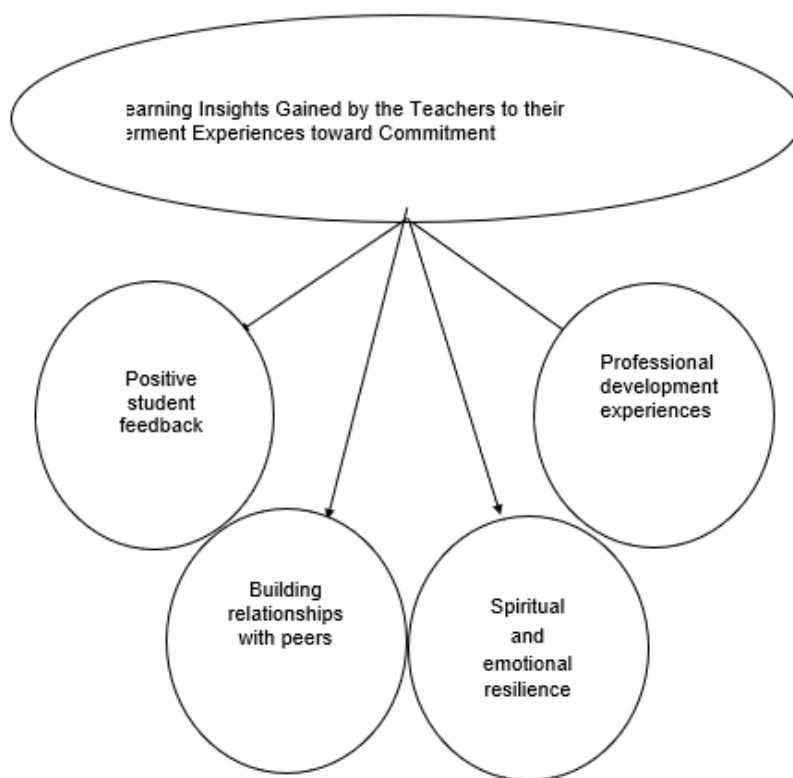


Fig. 5. Educational values drawn from the study

their personal motivations, professional experiences, and institutional dynamics. This has several implications aligned with the research questions focused on understanding the nature of their lived experiences and the factors that enhance or hinder their sense of commitment. First, the study uncovered that teachers' personal values and intrinsic motivation serve as foundational anchors in their commitment journey. Despite challenges such as workload and lack of support, teachers often drew strength from their sense of vocation and desire to impact learners' lives. This suggests that educational institutions must recognize and cultivate these internal motivations through platforms that allow teachers to share success stories, engage in reflective practices, and reaffirm their purpose. To support the implications of this study, a relevant and widely accepted theory is Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000). SDT emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation and identifies three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness that must be satisfied to foster motivation and psychological well-being. Second, the research highlighted that organizational support systems play a critical role in shaping commitment. Teachers described instances where administrative recognition, mentorship, and collaborative culture positively influenced their dedication. Conversely, a lack of recognition or unclear institutional direction contributed to feelings of disconnection. Thus, the study implies that school leaders must intentionally build environments where appreciation, open communication, and teacher agency are embedded in the school culture. This is supported by Organizational Support Theory (OST) and elements of Transformational Leadership Theory. Third, the findings point to the role of professional development as a dynamic influence on teacher commitment. Teachers expressed that continuous learning opportunities, when aligned with their needs and

interests, reinforced their confidence and sustained their engagement. Therefore, development programs must be personalized, relevant, and values-integrated to truly support teachers' growth and long-term retention. Lastly, contextual constraints such as policy changes, curriculum overload, and limited resources emerged as barriers to commitment. However, the resilience demonstrated by teachers in finding adaptive strategies such as peer collaboration and faith-based coping, highlights their capacity for self-leadership. This implies that future interventions should focus not only on external reforms but also on enabling teachers to navigate their contexts with autonomy and resilience. Empowering teachers to develop self-regulatory skills, reflective practices, and supportive peer networks can strengthen their ability to thrive despite systemic challenges.

4.3. Future Directions—Based on the findings of the study, it is important that the findings are properly relayed and used by the significant people whom this research was intended for. **Learners** The voices of teachers in this study reflected how student engagement, gratitude, and responsiveness often rekindle their sense of purpose. When learners show appreciation for their teachers' efforts through active participation, curiosity, and respect they indirectly contribute to reinforcing their teachers' commitment. Future initiatives might explore ways for learners to become more conscious contributors to positive teacher-student dynamics. **Teachers** Participants revealed that their commitment was not a fixed trait, but a journey shaped by inner reflections, personal convictions, and shared experiences. Teachers are encouraged to engage in meaningful self-reflection and collegial conversations where they can revisit their motivations and re-anchor their purpose. Informal peer support, storytelling, and community-building among educators can serve as restorative spaces in times of exhaustion or doubt.

School Administrators The study revealed

how moments of recognition, open dialogue, and authentic leadership shaped how teachers saw their role in the institution. School leaders are therefore called to listen actively to teachers' narratives, create environments where they feel valued, and foster a culture of trust and shared vision. Leadership that resonates with the emotional and professional realities of teachers plays a pivotal role in sustaining their commitment. Department of Education Teachers described a desire for support systems that are responsive to their everyday realities. Future directions point toward professional development programs that are not only skill-based but also emotionally supportive and grounded in values. Policies and trainings must move beyond compliance and instead aim to affirm the human side of teaching—the struggles, triumphs, and resilience that define commitment.

Policy Makers The study makes evident that policy, when disconnected from classroom realities, may unintentionally burden rather than empower educators. Participants emphasized the importance of being heard. Thus, future directions include more participatory policy design, where teachers' narratives, concerns, and aspirations shape the very fabric of educational reforms.

Future Researchers This study opens doors for further qualitative inquiries into how commitment unfolds across different phases of a teacher's career or under varying institutional contexts. Future researchers may build on these narratives by exploring longitudinal experiences or examining how socio-cultural and spiritual factors influence the meaning teachers assign to commitment.

5. References

- Bacher-Pelz, S., Bassler, A., & Unterbruner, M. (2019). Workload, commitment and well-being among secondary school teachers: An international comparison. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 27(82), 1–32.
- Baloran, E., & Hernan, J. T. (2020). Crisis self-efficacy and work commitment of education workers among public schools [Available at: <https://www.preprints.org>].
- Barendsen, E., & Jansen, E. P. (2019). Teachers' professional development: A matrix of theory and practice. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(2), 231–248.
- Cabigao, J. R. (2019). Teachers' organizational commitment and its correlation on instructional competence [ISSN: 2704-3010]. *INSTABRIGHT e-GAZETTE*, 1(2).
- Chang, M., & Lee, Y. (2022). Access to resources and its effect on teacher empowerment in schools. *Educational Resources Review*, 40(4), 432–445.
- Collie, R. J. (2021). Teachers perceived autonomy support and adaptability: An investigation employing the job demands-resources model as relevant to workplace exhaustion, disengagement, and commitment. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 74, 125–136.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2020). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (6th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Sykes, C. (2019). *A broken contract: The state of america's teacher shortage*. Harvard University Press.
- David, D. (2005). *Essentials of research design and methodology*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Davidson, R. J. (2000). Approach-withdrawal and cerebral asymmetry: Emotional expression and brain physiology. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58.

- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2000). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1–32). SAGE.
- Dicke, T. (2020). A longitudinal study of teachers' occupational well-being: Applying the job demands-resources model. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 23(2), 262–277.
- Ebuenga-Amora, M. (2020). Teachers' organizational commitment, teaching efficacy belief and level of performance in relation to their pupils' attitudes [Unpublished Manuscript].
- Ferguson, H. R. (2019). Teacher quality and absenteeism: Why do good teachers have lower rates of absence? *Journal of Human Resources*, 53(1), 158–182.
- Garcia, M., Hernandez, P., & Lopez, J. (2020). Barriers to teacher empowerment in schools: A case study of public education. *Journal of Educational Leadership*, 42(3), 289–305.
- Gasson, S. (2004). Framing design: A social process view of information system development. *Proceedings of the Nineteenth International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS '98)*, 224–236.
- Guskey, T. R. (2019). *Professional development in education: Evidence-based strategies for improving practice* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Han, Y., & Wang, Y. (2021). Investigating the correlation among chinese efl teachers' self-efficacy, work engagement, and reflection [Unpublished manuscript].
- Hansen, J. R., & Kjeldsen, A. M. (2019). Comparing affective commitment in the public and private sectors: A comprehensive test of multiple mediation effects. *International Public Management Journal*, 1, 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2016.1276033>
- Hargreaves, A., & O'Connor, M. T. (2019). *Collaborative professionalism: When teaching together means learning for all*. Corwin Press.
- Harris, D., & Nguyen, K. (2021). The impact of professional development on teacher empowerment in secondary schools. *International Journal of Teacher Education*, 57(2), 183–198.
- IBON Philippines. (2019). Teacher-researchers under the dost-seameo southeast asian ministers of education organization - regional center for educational innovation and technology (seameo innotech) program are underpaid [Available at: <https://quizlet.com/206129574/foun-3000-summer-sample-exam-1-flash-cards/>].
- International Labour Organization. (2021). *Global report on teachers: Towards a more resilient teaching workforce*. ILO.
- Jacobs, T. S. (2019). *High school teacher perceptions of empowerment* [Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University].
- Jakobsson, R. (2019). Employee commitment, how it can be influenced by the recruitment and induction processes of organizations and what employees experience to be the source of the changes to their commitment levels during these processes and their individual components [Unpublished manuscript].
- Johnson, B., Down, B., & Le Cornu, R. (2019). Promoting teacher workforce sustainability: A report on the perceived benefits of mentor teachers in australian schools. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(1), 1–14.
- Kiral, B. (2020). The relationship between the empowerment of teachers by school administrators and organizational commitments of teachers. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 7(1), 248–265.

- Kirika, J. I. (2019). Empowering teachers: The influence of transformational leadership in christian schools [Retrieved from <http://www.tbr.edu>].
- Lee, S., & Chang, E. (2022). Cultural barriers to teacher empowerment in educational reform. *Journal of Educational Change*, 43(4), 487–505.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 163–188). SAGE.
- McLeod, S. A. (2013). Erik erikson [Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Erk-Erikson.html>].
- Meyer, J. P., Stanley, L. J., & Parfyonova, N. M. (2019). Employee commitment in context: The nature and implication of commitment profiles. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80(1), 1–16.
- Morrissey, G., & Higgs, J. (2006). Phenomenological research and adolescent female sexuality: Discoveries and applications. *The Qualitative Report*, 11(1), 161–181. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2006.1689>
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods* (1st ed.). SAGE.
- Nguyen, P. N. D. (2021). *The impact of extrinsic work factors on job satisfaction and organizational commitment at higher education institutions in vietnam* [Doctoral dissertation, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM)].
- O’Hanlon, M., & Cohen, L. (2019). The role of leadership trust in fostering teacher empowerment. *Educational Management Administration Leadership*, 47(5), 785–800.
- O’Hanlon, S., & Cohen, D. H. (2019). School funding challenges: States face mounting pressure to meet the needs of all students.
- Patel, S. (2021). The impact of teacher workload on empowerment and professional growth. *Journal of Education Policy*, 35(1), 88–102.
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2019). Job satisfaction, stress, and coping strategies in the teaching profession. what do the teachers say? *International Education Studies*, 8, 181–192. <https://doi.org/10.2466/14.02.PR0.114k14w0>
- Smith, R., & Johnson, P. (2020). Teacher autonomy and its relationship with empowerment: A critical review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 68, 121–130.
- Stanage, S. M. (1987). *Adult education and phenomenological research: New directions for theory, practice and research*. Robert E. Krieger.
- Taylor, J., & Thompson, R. (2021). Teacher recognition and its impact on empowerment and motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(2), 207–220.
- Thompson, H., & Miller, T. (2023). Policy inconsistency and its effects on teacher empowerment. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 61(1), 45–59.
- Wang, J., Keil, M., Oh, L.-B., & Shen, Y. (2019). Impacts of organizational commitment, interpersonal closeness, and confucian ethics on willingness to report bad news in software projects. *Journal of Systems and Software*, 125, 220–233. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jss.2016.12.004>
- Williams, A., & Hayes, D. (2020). Collaboration and empowerment: Overcoming isolation in schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 76, 36–45.