

Exploring the Experiences of School Information Coordinators (SIC) in the New Normal Education

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Abstract: The School Information Coordinators (SIC) ensure efficient communication and information are coordinated and strengthened in their respective schools, especially in the new normal. Despite its successful designation, challenges were experienced in performing their roles, which hampers their effectiveness and functions. This qualitative case study explored the experiences of 12 SIC by interviewing them about their performance of their duties in the new normal education. The School Information Coordinators' duties and responsibilities in the new normal involve verifying information, facilitating the conduct of information, and helping to address the schools' issues and concerns. Furthermore, strategies to disseminate information include initiating collaborative efforts, strengthening relationships, being knowledgeable on tasks, and doing technologically inclined practices. Their challenges include poor internet connection and overloading of functions and responsibilities. However, in dealing with these challenges, School Information Coordinators applied resourceful in problem-solving, increasing work efforts, and seeking help and support. School Information Coordinators encountered different challenges, but efforts to overcome challenges were made possible by applying creativity and flexibility to their assigned designation.

Keywords: Challenges, Communication, Dissemination, Experiences, Information, New Normal

1. Introduction

Information dissemination constitutes an essential and critical factor for the success of education and learning programs (Dhawan, 2021). It requires systematic collection, organization, and storage of information and someone who can be trusted and effective in relaying important news and updates that are useful and relevant to the needs of a particular institution. Some approaches that they use are traditional, while others are innovative. Thus, our current situation in this pandemic brought a significant impact and change in the life of the school and the rest of its community. Schools and teachers need help to provide and disseminate information, especially in rural areas where internet connectivity and proper channelling or communication to its community and stakeholders are issues that need to be addressed. Information plays a crucial role in knowledge expansion and development. Information is data that has a particular meaning within a specific context. Dissemination, however, means spreading it expensively and making it available. (Reynolds, 2021) explains that information refers to gaining, storing, and exchanging

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knowledge to produce facts and evidence. Thus, information dissemination means spreading knowledge to individuals and groups within the organization. In everyday school life, educational organizations need information in the form of data and facts for their development and planning.

Several reasons why information dissemination might lead to better outcomes. First, it could increase students' choice of the right school. Second, it can promote participation since information can increase performance monitoring. Third, it can improve the parent's and student's voices by providing them with externally validated content and empowering them in their interactions with school and local political and administrative authorities (Bruns et al., 2011). Also, being able to do something in response to the information given is essential. The current COVID-19 pandemic has yielded overwhelming amounts of information. Too much information makes it challenging to identify what is factual and what is not. As a result, people struggle to decide what beliefs to hold and what actions to take (Barber, 2020). Ladan et al. (2020) describe education as a tool for national progress and development. Thus, individuals must obtain information from trustworthy sources and protect themselves from misinformation. When information is transformed into valuable knowledge, learning institutions improve their services and develop innovative techniques for sustainable quality service delivery.

Despite the difficulty in proximity, as part of the community, understanding the situation we are experiencing during this pandemic is a must to have a healthy school and community- relationship. The community needs the school as a positive information force for economic and social betterment (Reddy et al., 2020). The best way of helping the community understand the actual function of the school is to make them participate by hearing their concerns and addressing the issues. How a school chooses to disseminate information should be determined by each School, this way, educators and administrators will implement and maintain such potential information sharing (Doan et al., 2003). This process can be possible if the school and the public have designated individuals to access information that can influence decision-making. In addition, information providers need to adopt information communication techniques and technologies that will enable them to disseminate information effectively and timely.

Teachers in the new normal must employ new practices and forms of management professionally and emotionally to adapt to the virus outbreak that changes entirely. Hence, teachers from different schools were designated in the other coordinator ships to improve the consistency of work and information dissemination amidst the pandemic (Wyman, 2020). Teachers must learn the art of engaging and communicating with the pupils, parents, and the community, especially in this digital age or modern times to address the educational and learning needs of the learners and disseminate school information that will help maintain its roles and functions. A school coordinator could help the school nurture and maintain an effective relationship with internal and external agencies. Meanwhile, plans and programs have been developed as the pandemic disrupts the teaching and learning process (Hartshorne et al., 2020). Education leadership is essential for implementing information and communication technologies in Schools (Woo et al., 2020). Educators, the prime facilitators of education, adjusted to this transition and the challenges they faced while adapting to it as their preparedness for the coming times (Movkebayeva et al., 2018). However, information and communication technology coordinators should be more prevalent, who assist teachers in implementing information and communication.

Thus, DepEd Memorandum No. 99 s. 2010 titled Designation of Regional and Division Communications Officers, stated that to better facilitate news and information processing from the regions and divisions to the central office, the department directs all the regional directors and the School's division/city superintendents to designate communications officers who will work with this office through the Communication Unit. Moreover, DepEd Memorandum No. 219 s. 2012 titled effective communication for regional information officers, which aimed to capacitate the Regional Information Officers on ineffective and efficient communication skills, good public media relations, press conferences, briefing management, writing of publishable news/feature stories, and developing a favorable public image of the department. Also, DepEd Memorandum No. 145 s. 2005 which was all about Training-Workshop for Central, Regional, and division information/communication officers, stated the objectives of the training workshops, which were; to orient and discuss the department's new Communications Program, including communications efforts on the Schools First Initiative, with all information and communication officers of regions and divisions, to organize proactive communication network among all information and communications Officers or Regions and the Central Office, it enhanced the capability, the appreciation of roles and familiarization of task, of information and communication officers in the Schools first initiative. Furthermore, DepEd Memorandum No. 72 s. 2013 titled Designation of regional information officers (Rios), which directs all the regional directors to designate the regional information officers in their respective regions to facilitate news information better to facilitate news and information processing from the region to the central office.

The Department of Education (2021) issued another related Memorandum No. 017 s in connection with the separate memorandums released. 2021 titled Designation of School Information Coordinators, designated in every public elementary, secondary, and senior high School nationwide as counterparts of the Division and Regional Information Officers. School Information Coordinators facilitated the conduct of verification of information based on protocols, data privacy, integrity, and confidentiality, provided updates to the school division, region, or central office that may be referred to in media releases to national media, supported their respective schools, School's division, and regional offices in responding to media queries on local issues. In addition, School Information Coordinators coordinated with the schools' division, regional or central office to request official statements on existing issues, perform duties and responsibilities related to DepEd Public Affairs programs, projects, and activities, and perform other tasks associated with the efficient communication, documentation, and dissemination of information to DepEd central office and vice versa.

With this, in addition to ensuring coordination and strengthening of convergence from schools to the national level, the Department of Education recognizes the importance of School Information Coordinators. The School Information Coordinator was responsible for helping and acting as a focal person in dealing with the issues and concerns involving their school area raised by the public and the media. A detailed report should be submitted within 24 hours to school division offices about any untoward incidents within their respective areas. There is a general lack of empirical research on the experiences and contributions of school information coordinators in developing social networks that potentially contribute to improving the situations of the school and its community. Therefore, this paper seeks to fill the current research gap.

The designation of School Information Coordinators plays a meaningful role in making school programs and activities successful, especially during this time of the pandemic. Thus, this investigation was raised to discover the experiences and challenges of the designated School Information Coordinators they encountered in their respective schools. These experiences may be used as a tool so that the people in the community will be impressed with the idea that the school is for everybody and will make the community happy and prosperous. School information Coordinators should equal the task of providing the correct information, at the right time, to the right people using the proper techniques or tools.

1.1 Research Objectives

This study aimed to explore the experiences and challenges the designated School Information Coordinators encountered in the new normal education. It also explored how School Information Coordinators perform their duties and responsibilities to ensure effective communication during the pandemic. Moreover, it presented the strategies that were applied in disseminating information in the new normal and the coping mechanism in dealing with the challenges they encountered on their designation.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design, specifically a case study since the researchers were focusing on an unusual or exciting case. Merriam (1998) remarks that "the single defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case." Case studies are responsive to changes during the study and to the needs of the stakeholders, according to (Johnson et al., 2004). A case study was chosen because the designated School Information Coordinator plan, design, or decide the school programs, policies, and dissemination of information from their schools. Questions were asked based on categories regarding the coordinator's perceptions of his school work, field experiences, and challenges.

2.2 Research Environment and Participants

This study was conducted in Midsalip Zamboanga Del Sur, Philippines. These School Information Coordinators were coming from the different schools of Midsalip. This study covered 12 elementary teachers or School Information Coordinators assigned and designated in the different schools of Midsalip. All participants were designated based on the qualifications required from the memorandum given and were chosen by their school heads.

2.3 Research Instrument

The researchers were the primary instruments that helped gather the data with an interview guide or self-made questions. The interview guide focused on soliciting reactions and personal experiences from the participants regarding their contributions and the challenges encountered as School Information Coordinators. In addition, with the help of a voice recorder, the review process became more manageable for the researchers. It provided an accurate, detailed account of the interview process and captured essential points without jotting everything down. The answers solicited, or responses gathered from the participants, were subjected to analysis and interpretation.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with the research participants. The interviews were done following the health protocols. During the interview, the participants scheduled a time that was convenient for them. Probing questions were asked to the participants to clarify and provide a more detailed response. The researchers explained to the participants the importance of their response to the study and requested that they answer wholly and honestly about their responsibility. The researchers made clear that the answers remained confidential.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed and interpreted using the approach of (Meriam, 1998). According to Meriam, coding is the initial step in category construction, which means grouping bits of data, or called analytical coding was applied next, was to break down data into bits of information and sort them into distinct categories. Then, data were categorized in a mutually exclusive way to make the data of one category answer the one research question it pertains to. Lastly, categories were organized in such a way that makes sense in answering questions. The categories chosen for the data analysis were responsive to the research purpose, comprehensive, and accurate. Thus, the categories provided in this study were sensitive, which means that the participants in this study, without prior knowledge of the study, understood the main idea. Furthermore, the categories were conceptually consistent, meaning the same level of abstraction should characterize all categories.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Duties and Responsibilities of School Information Coordinator During Pandemic

Three categories emerged from the responses about the duties and responsibilities of the School Information Coordinator in the new normal: Verifying the Information, Facilitating the Conduct of Information, and Addressing the Issue or Concern.

3.1.1 Verifying the Information

School Information Coordinators need to ensure the reliability and the sources of information before spreading its content. They have to avoid the chances of misinformation. The participants disclosed.

“It is not easy to be SIC, especially in this pandemic. Sometimes, I failed to check the sources of the information I received. Most of those are from Messenger and Facebook. I just forwarded and informed my co-teachers immediately without knowing that that information or news was changed or from untrusted sources. Thus, I need to verify the information by asking other SIC, some teachers, and my school head to make sure that those are legit and true.” – P1

“I verify the information by ensuring that the memo or information forwarded are shared by the trusted group chats, principals, and PSDS.”- P4

“I have to check and verify first where the information came from to avoid confusion of the people I have shared with” - P8

The DepEd Memorandum No. 017 (s. 2021) states that the designated School Information Coordinator: assists and acts as the focal person in verifying and addressing issues and concerns raised by the public and the media involving their school or area and provides updates to the school's division, region or central office that may be referred to in media releases to national media. They must facilitate the verification of information based on protocols, data privacy, integrity, and confidentiality. Some of the designated School Information Coordinators were very vigilant regarding information sharing. They even had notes and hard copies of memorandums compiled in a folder so that they could relay information with basis during school meetings. School Heads also shared that their designated School Information Coordinators were the ones who usually asked questions and clarity to verify information from different sources. With this, School Information Coordinators learned the importance of verifying and backtracking information to ascertain its source and context in validating the information for its correctness, validity, and accuracy. To avoid misinformation and miscommunication, teachers or the School Information Coordinators to verify the information by asking other School Information Coordinators or School Heads to make sure if a source is reliable or trusted. It is almost impossible to accurately determine whether a piece of information or news is reliable based on the news article. Therefore, additional information verification sources are needed (Laato et al., 2020).

3.1.2 Facilitating the Dissemination of Information

Information needs to be plainly and carefully stated. With this, School Information Coordinators discuss with the teachers, parents, and other involved individuals the new information, memorandums, and advisories received and released by the Department of Education. They shared.

“Being a SIC, how we facilitate information is one of our vital roles during this pandemic. We must share many advisories, memoranda, and information with our colleagues. Group chats were created to discuss and share information of what is new and what had been revised on those orders and memos that the department had released.” - P1

“My role is to give accurate information to our students, parents, and other stakeholders. So, during LAC sessions, I can share and discuss important information I received with my school heads and co-teachers. After the discussion and sharing of ideas, if there is a need for the information to be relayed to parents or stakeholders. I will inform them during Homeroom Meetings.”- P9

The DepEd Memorandum No. 017 (s. 2021) stated that School Information Coordinators perform duties and responsibilities related to DepEd Public Affairs programs, projects, and activities; and perform other tasks related to the efficient communication, documentation, and dissemination of information to the DepEd Central Office and vice versa. Moreover, school heads added that information or announcements were posted on their transparency boards and conducted urgent meetings with the teaching personnel and parents, with the help of the School Information Coordinator, to share and discuss school-related concerns so that proper actions and dissemination would be done. The data showed that School Information

Coordinators prove that they facilitate the information they receive and be disseminated accurately. Thus, they make discussions more constructive and positive during LAC Sessions and Homeroom Meetings. In addition, they encourage participation by hearing the ideas shared, which results in more productive communication. People commonly work in groups to solve information problems by interacting with others (Hansen et al., 2000).

3.1.3 Helping in Addressing the Schools' Issue or Concern.

School Information Coordinators prioritize remediation efforts and actions when issues and concerns are identified. They take action to avoid future problems and make collaborative efforts to comply with the documents, address the concerns and ask for advice or help if necessary. They shared.

“I also facilitate the communication of any issue in the school. For example, there is an incident of bullying. I am the one who informed the parents of the involved student, and during our GPTA, I reminded the parents to guide their children so that that incident will not happen again.” – P6

“I tried to solve this problem or issue by asking help from other SICs or teachers from other schools for me to submit the required reports on time. -P5

Furthermore, according to DepEd Memorandum No. 017 (s. 2021), School Information Coordinator Facilitate the communication of any untoward incidents in their respective areas and submit a detailed report within 24 hours to DepEd Central Office Public Affairs Service copy furnished to their respective regional and school division offices. Also, School Information Coordinators support their respective schools, school's division, and regional offices in responding to media queries on local issues; coordinate with the school's division, regional or central office to request official statements on existing issues. School Information Coordinators are vital in taking appropriate action that solves and addresses those issues. According to one of the school heads, the good thing about having School Information Coordinators in their schools was that some issues or documents to work on were addressed and complied with without his presence in the school. He shared that this designation made the school reports submitted on time. In addition, one of the participants or the School Information Coordinators showed how to write essential details in the record book during meetings to follow up and see the progress of their tasks to be submitted and addressed. School problems and unexpected issues or concerns may arise that require the teachers to address the issue by reminding all the parents to discipline their children at home to avoid unpleasant incidents again during meetings. In addition, the School Information Coordinator's school-related concerns were addressed by practicing problem-solving, like asking for help from well-informed teachers so that required reports be submitted on time. In completing assignments successfully, asking for help to produce work that accurately addresses the issue is vital. It adds value by anticipating other work-related issues (Carpenter, 2019).

3.2 Strategies in the Dissemination of Information

School Information Coordinators' beliefs, practices, and attitudes are essential to be effective and perform well in their assigned tasks that improve school services. With this, four themes come into view regarding the School Information Coordinator's strategies to disseminate information. These involve: initiating

collaborative efforts, strengthening relationships, being knowledgeable on tasks, and doing technologically inclined practices.

3.2.1 Strengthening Coordination Among Stakeholders.

School Information Coordinators who practice collaboration with each other lead to more innovations, bring people closer together, and establish healthy communication. It is also an opportunity to create something great. The participants disclosed:

“In my school, some reports need to be done. So, I inform my co-teachers and ask them to answer and work on the necessary forms and documents. If there are questions and clarifications, we can share ideas and solve them together. I am responsible for submitting them online or to our district office.”-P2

“I collaborated and inspired my peers to have collective action on planning and establishing modern concepts and exciting strategies in the new normal in order to reconnect our pupils’ interests and parents’ participation on learning amidst pandemic”- P3

“Collaboration is necessary as a SIC because it requires you to seek help from your colleagues, especially to your school head, to make sure that the information you have received and soon you will share are trusted and true or legit.” - P4

“One of the strategies which I find effective and helpful is collaboration with colleagues because even if you are designated as SIC, it does not mean you know everything. Work becomes faster and easier if you work together”. – P11

In addition, school heads believed that School Information Coordinator practiced collaboration. According to them, School Information Coordinators were very active in assisting and helping other teachers in times of new information or orders received. Furthermore, the researcher observed that School Information Coordinators were trusted by their school heads. During the researcher’s interview, the school head asked the School Information Coordinator to help one of the teachers comply with other reports by sending them to an online platform. With collaboration, School Information Coordinators allow their colleagues to share their skills, expertise, and experiences working with school-related works and documents. Organizing and motivating teachers to work together made the work faster and easier. Thus, they best establish communication with modern concepts by having collective planning and exciting strategies. People learn better when they anticipate opportunities to share with others (Lieberman, 2012).

3.2.2 Strengthening Relationships

Teachers or School Information Coordinators who learn to build ties or good relationships, willingness to respect the views of colleagues, parents, and the community develop connections and are ideal for achieving the same goals. The participants mentioned:

“As a SIC, it taught me the beauty of proper communication and strengthened the relationships with the individuals in the community by asking for their presence and suggestions to work together on a certain task or project.” –P2

“My strategies in performing my role were strengthening the relationship of the parents and my colleagues because, as a SIC and also a teacher, the school and its community should work together for the betterment of the school. If I have a good relationship with them, I can easily ask for help anytime and be open with suggestions for the quality of education we can offer to the students.” - P3

One school head shared that the good thing about involving the community in planning different projects, involving them with various school activities and programs can make the school produce productive students. She added that School Information Coordinator designated in her school showed dedication and creativity to make all the goals and plans successful. School Information Coordinators keep communication consistent and strengthen the relationship between the schools and their stakeholders. With clear communication, inviting their presence and accepting their suggestions helped demonstrate that their participation is valued and that their views and opinions are considered for the quality education of the students. Teachers must appreciate parental cooperation and recognize their responsibility to build necessary competence in the school system by creating the school’s standards for parental cooperation (Westergard, 2007).

3.2.3 Being Knowledgeable on Task

It is essential to consider what type of information you need and how you access and apply it on the job. Thus, the School Information Coordinator's knowledge of its assigned task can greatly help organize information and connect information sources and ideas shared among a group of people. They said:

“Be knowledgeable about things you have shared because there are lots of queries that will be coming from your colleagues once you share such information. You have to study first those memos, advisories, and orders that the Department released.” – P1

“It is necessary to know and practice the things or tasks given to me because it affects my school job performance and designation. My strategy is understanding the information, study, taking notes, the important details before disseminating it.” – P9

School heads said that since they were authorized to choose the qualified School Information Coordinator among the teaching and staff of his school, so he chose the most deserved teacher. The teacher who could manipulate gadgets and was an expert in different platforms and other considerations were good at communication and had positive attitudes towards working with others. School Information Coordinators do not just share information; they make sure they are knowledgeable and take time to study and understand the information they receive. Understanding essential details at work helps to solve problems and can be helpful in different situations.

3.2.4 Doing Technologically Inclined Practices

When a person likes and is good with technology and other forms of technical work. Technology has become substantial to the field of education, especially in this time of pandemic. It became an excellent guide in performing the School Information Coordinators' responsibilities. The participants revealed:

“Aside from being the School Information, I am also the ICT coordinator in my school, which is also an advantage for me to use technology in information dissemination.” – P5

“Since I am more active on social media and can easily receive information because of having an internet connection at home and in my classroom, I am capable of working on the tasks given to me, like forwarding the different memos, advisories, and announcements in the created group chats with my co-teachers in school and most of the time is using messenger and Facebook.” – P7

“I created a Facebook page so that I can Inform by posting the people in the community, most especially the parents and stakeholders if there are activities, meetings, or programs in the school.” - P9

“As a school Information coordinator, as well as the ICT coordinator, I learned to use google forms, google sheets, and other forms of online applications that helps me to share and receive information.” –P10

School heads shared that during SBM validation, they were asked to make or create a page where they could post announcements and activities of their school. For this reason, School Information Coordinators created a page for their schools to update parents, stakeholders, and all other concerns on school-related concerns and activities. In addition, the researcher also checked and proved that the Facebook page existed. Technology has been a great help when it comes to information seeking and sharing; thus, the School Information Coordinators used a variety of platforms such as Facebook, messenger, google forms, google sheets, and other forms of online applications, which create excellent connections and communication among their colleagues and their community. The role of technology becomes pronounced, and advances in various fields emerge and impact people's lifestyles (Allam, 2019). It has also been suggested that individuals may seek additional information and verify the information they suspect was false when exposed to misinformation (Tandoc et al., 2017).

3.3 Challenges of the School Information Coordinator

Three categories related to the challenges the School Information Coordinator encountered include poor internet connection, overloading of functions and responsibilities, and needing more training.

3.3.1 Poor Internet Connection

The internet provides many ways to have effective communication. Sharing and receiving information over the internet has been vital, especially during the pandemic. However, a slow and unstable internet connection may hamper the effectiveness of designated School Information Coordinators. The participants shared:

“Challenges such as lack of internet connection or signal because without that it is so hard to share information on your colleagues some might receive your chats or messages and other may not, and that will lead to miscommunication.” – P1

“Since my School is in a rural area, an Internet connection is one of the challenges I have encountered. Receiving and sharing important information may hamper because of the unavailability of the Internet. That is why, sometimes, I feel so frustrated. Our School will be mentioned because we failed to comply with some necessary documents on its deadline; I blame myself for that.” – P5

“Most of us in our locality District are struggling with the internet connection. Sometimes the Internet is good; however, most of the time, we must travel to have an Internet connection. In connection to this as SIC, there are delays in receiving information and miscommunication towards other teachers and schools.” – P8

Additionally, School heads explained that they reached out to internet providers to check if they could have their internet connection; however, due to the school's location, only some of them could find an internet connection. However, other schools have already started installing towers or even buying modems since some parts or areas where connections were somehow good. One of the challenges of School Information Coordinators is the lack of internet connectivity; receiving and sharing information requires an internet connection; thus, work tasks are disrupted and delayed, which leads to miscommunication and frustration because School Information Coordinators feel that they are not performing their work effectively. Slow internet connectivity hampers the motivation of users to innovate in a way that could contribute to inclusive growth and the development of a whole information society (Salac et al., 2016).

3.3.2 Overloading of Functions and Responsibilities

School Information Coordinator work overload includes paperwork, time budgets, and beating submission deadlines. The responsibility to take on multiple duties has been identified as a significant cause of work stress and burnout among teachers or School Information Coordinators. They revealed:

“In addition to the challenges I encounter, there are lots of works to do as a teacher, and that is the reason I sometimes forget and delays doing other assigned tasks, which affect my performance as a teacher and designated SIC.”- P5

“Teaching is so stressful nowadays, there are lots of extra-curricular activities that require me to work on, and sometimes I have to take schoolwork home often just to finish everything.” – P6

“Honestly, because of loads of work, I do not understand my job. Too many coordinator ships that I almost have no time to handle classes. I have to work the paper works first because of the deadline”. –P10

Moreover, the researcher noticed that teachers' duties extend beyond standing at the front of a classroom and delivering lessons. They were required to handle different coordinator ships, and one of those was as School Information Coordinators, which required them to work even administrative-related tasks. School heads also shared that they have no choice but to divide the tasks among their teachers to comply with the reports needed in their school. Increased workloads, delays of other tasks, lots of extra-curricular activities, and too many coordinator ships resulted in overstretched teachers in school. The profession has become

increasingly stressful, as teachers have to meet many almost impossible deadlines and responsibilities, not to mention the excessive amount of time they spend on work-related tasks (Hepburn & Brown, 2001).

3.3.3 Lacking in Training

Characters, skills, communication, and delivery of information are essentials, and all impact the function of the designated School Information Coordinator. However, lacking training of the School Information Coordinator resulted in a lack of confidence to deliver quality information, resulting in poor performance. They revealed.

“Sometimes, I failed to discuss thoroughly the information forwarded to me for the reason that I have lack of understanding with the information for the reason that I am untrained with my designation, which leads to miscommunication.” –P2

“Another challenge is lack of training to us SIC because our designation is instant, I have no expertise on what exactly what my role.” –P4

“Since there is no proper training, I do have lots of queries to the other SICs and my school head for me to be guided on what to do.” –P7

“I was not trained on my designation as SIC. My school head informed me immediately that schools should have designated SIC.” – P9

Indeed, since the pandemic, some School Information Coordinators believe they need to learn how to do their designation correctly. One School head also shared that they had no choice but to choose who among his teachers was qualified to be designated as School Information Coordinator since they were required to submit a designation form in their school. Teachers who are School Information Coordinators who did not undergo training regarding its designation need to prepare for communication processes, lack expertise and are forced to turn to others to find support. The underlying assumption is that trained teachers promote effectiveness. The teachers should be trained where gaps are identified to enable them to cope with the requirements of the school curriculum (Research Clue, 2020).

3.4 School Information Coordinator ways in Dealing with the Challenges

School Information Coordinators apply appropriate coping strategies in dealing with challenges they encounter. The coping strategies include being resourceful in problem-solving, increasing work efforts, and seeking help and support.

3.4.1 Resourceful in Problem Solving

This category refers to creating new solutions with the things we already have. Commonly, School Information Coordinators complained about the poor internet connection in their school, which resulted in delays in work and unfinished reports. With this, using the available resources within their area or community, School Information Coordinators could perform their functions more innovatively and strategically. The participants shared:

“Find ways how to deal with such situations. For example, on the problem of lacking internet connection, there means to communicate, I must set date and time to conduct face to face meeting of my colleagues to discuss such information.” – P1

“I have to make sure that I find ways to find internet connections by connecting to PISO wifi available near my school and have someone to contact in case I failed to be updated online”- P4

“Since our barangay already has free wifi provided and funded by the government during break time, I make sure that I have checked the given information using their internet connection.”- P5

Based on the researcher’s observation, houses along the road with the schools have Wi-Fi vendors and Internet modems such as Globe at Home Wi-Fi. One school head said the Barangay Local Government Unit provided them a radio or walkie-talkie to contact them since phone signals and internet connection were unavailable. School Information Coordinators show resourcefulness by finding ways to deal with the unavailability of the internet in their schools by discussing information by conducting face-to-face meetings, using Wi-Fi Vendo Machines near the schools, and radio provided by the BLGU, and even connecting to free Wi-Fi to ensure that information is received and shared.

3.4.2 Time Management

This category includes clear goals and objectives. Overloading functions and responsibilities resulted in stress and inefficiency of work on the designated School Information Coordinators. In connection to this, to overcome this challenge, they put so much effort and commitment towards their assigned tasks by managing their time at work in school and setting up goals and objectives as they perform their roles which turns out to be a success and more productive outcomes. They shared:

“As a teacher with tons of work to do, including the tasks of SIC, I have to work harder and smarter. What I do is balance my time by working first on the tasks that are most important and have deadlines. This would help me to avoid stress and panic.”-P5

“What I do in dealing with the challenges is I set goals or objectives every time there is information that needs to be addressed or worked on as soon as possible. I always remember the deadline for me to be guided and motivated with my responsibilities as SIC. In this way, it is easier for me to keep track of my progress.”- P6

“I find it hard balancing my time because I have to conduct classes, and then unexpected works need to be done, like online reports, which require data from my co-teachers. So what I did is I ask their presence during break time or lunchtime. I practice time management”. –P10

“I coped with the challenges I experienced by knowing my objectives as I worked with my assigned tasks. By doing this, I know my priorities and help focus from the given timeline.” – P11

Despite the busy schedule of School Information Coordinators, school heads place confidence in the tasks given to the School Information Coordinator since they still manage to finish them on time. Moreover, they added that School Information Coordinators depends on more than just them; they can be trusted to work with school-related documents. School Information coordinators learn new skills and abilities when they take the time to put in consistent effort. By practicing time management, they achieve their goals faster, eliminate panic, and become more efficient (Naparan & Castañeda, 2021). They also prioritize their work task, keep track of their progress, and can finish it before deadlines. Thus, to accomplish the required objective and goals, an employee must perform their job and functions efficiently and effectively (Cania, 2014).

3.4.3 Mentoring

This category refers to building connections by allowing others to share information and resources. Newly designated and untrained School Information Coordinators require clarifications and understanding of the job. By seeking help and support, their queries and confusions were answered and addressed. They revealed:

“I ask for clarifications and help to avoid misunderstandings and confusion and for them to help me. -P2

“I sometimes seek help from my school head or other SICs from other schools to ensure that I do my responsibilities and perform my duties well. Also, I ask my school head to verify the information first so that I will be guided.” – P4

“As I said, I was not trained with my designation; the best way I could do is to ask for help from the people I believe could help and are more knowledgeable. I am referring to my school head. He is the first person who can answer my questions. If he does not know, I observed that he could also easily seek help from other school heads.” – P9

School heads also revealed that School Information Coordinators often asked assistance and questions if information or memorandums were recently released. School heads were also included or members in the group chats where announcements and memorandums were posted and were ready to disseminate to all the teachers and school heads in Midsalip District. School Information Coordinators asked for support and helped with clarification purposes. They seek help from their school heads and other School Information Coordinators who are more knowledgeable and expert to ensure they perform their duties. With this, they show effective communication, which makes them sure about things at work, and learn new and improved ways to achieve better results. By seeking information, getting feedback, socializing, and building relationships, proactive behavior enhances autonomy in newcomers, making them more efficient, competent, and motivated (Yu et al., 2016).

The duties and responsibilities, strategies, challenges, and how School Information Coordinators deal with the challenges based on their experiences in the new normal involve information dissemination and communication with the help of technology. Different innovations were applied and accepted by the School Information Coordinator. Their designation includes new policies and practices anchored on the Diffusion of Innovation Theory. School Information Coordinators serve as the channel for providing

quality information that addresses the school's issues and concerns to provide quality education in school, even in the new normal.

Educators have a critical role in their practice. They should be well-informed and have intelligent decisions on implementing practices to achieve various outcomes for the good and betterment of their students, the school, and its community. Teaching, co-curricular activities, administration and professional development, and extra workloads are aspects of their work they must fulfil. As curriculum and its implementation change, instructional technology develops rapidly, parents' expectations for holistic student development increase, and students' holistic development is expected to keep pace with those changes. The result of this study commends a favorable implication to the teachers, or the School Information Coordinators designated in every school, to the programs and services of the Department of Education, particularly in Midsalip 1 District. Since the study revealed that most of the participants or the School Information Coordinators put in their time and effort to perform and be responsible for their designation and assigned tasks as effectively and productively as they could so that information, concerns, and services of their schools would be addressed and prioritized even in the new normal. The successful designation of the School Information Coordinators in every school ensures effective communication, documentation, and dissemination of information based on the experiences they encountered.

4. Conclusion

School Information Coordinators' designation has been beneficial, especially in the new normal. Information was provided in more accessible and appropriate ways. Their means of information dissemination and ways of communication with their colleagues, parents, and local community contribute meaningfully to the success of every program and activity prepared and planned by the Department of Education to provide still the quality of education needed by the students and address the school issues and concerns that requires attention and solution amidst pandemic. Despite School Information Coordinators' success in performing their roles, they still need help affecting their effectiveness and performance. These challenges include; poor internet connection, overloading of functions and responsibilities, and untrained teacher or School Information Coordinators. However, they manage these challenges by having resourceful innovation, increasing their work efforts, and seeking help and support. School Information Coordinators have just been designated, challenges and problems may happen unexpectedly, but their creativity and flexibility at work resulted in overcoming these challenges.

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