

# Lived Experience of Public School Teachers as Poll Workers during the 2022 National and Local Elections

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## Abstract

Teachers have many different roles in society that are significant and valuable. Aside from performing the noble task of teaching the country's young citizens, teachers are also called to man the polling precincts every election day. Their duties are to ensure free, honest, and clean elections. Specifically, they should prevent any attempt to manipulate the results to benefit any candidate or party. This study will describe and understand the lived experience of public-school teachers who served as poll workers during the 2022 national and local elections. A phenomenological approach was utilized as a research design. Ten public school teachers who served as poll workers during the 2022 federal and provincial elections were considered study participants. They were selected through purposive sampling. An interview guide was used to gather the data. The Hyper-Research software identified the codes derived from the interview results to formulate the themes. Analysis of the responses was done using Moustaka's transcendental phenomenology. Results generated six themes, namely: (1) Being prepared to apply in the Training; (2) Experiencing Technical Difficulties; (3) Experiencing Internet Instability; (4) Experiencing Psychological Differences; (5) Using Coping Strategies; and (6) Being Fulfilled and Satisfied in the Job. The participants had a variety of experiences while serving on the electoral board. This includes their readiness to apply their training learning, encountering technical difficulties, experiencing internet instability, and, as a result, encountering psychological differences. Despite their difficulties, they dealt with them effectively by employing coping strategies. They have been through various good and bad situations, but they have shown such dedication to their work that they still feel satisfied and fulfilled despite the sleepless nights and starvation. This study recommended that all electoral board members should have adequate training to ensure that everyone knows what to do in case unpredictable circumstances happen so that they can respond immediately.

Keywords: election, poll workers, Teacher's experiences, training

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## 1. Introduction

Working the poll requires knowledge, skill, and an appropriate attitude to meet the complexity and intensity of the job. In established democracies, the professionalism of the electoral administration comes from a long history of nonpartisan public administration, a culture of civil servants' work ethic, career development for electoral staff, and a substantial budget (Kelly, 2007). Several researchers have investigated the importance of poll workers' duties. The results suggest that poll workers' compliance with prescribed standards indicates the quality of the electoral process (Bland et al., 2013; Watts, 2014). For this reason, to appreciate the effectiveness of electoral management, it is essential to start looking into the first moment when poll workers deliver essential services to voters in the polling stations. Compliance with the principles of the right to vote, confidentiality, security, transparency, and fairness in voting underpin the quality of an election throughout its different stages. Thus, poll workers' contribution to the electoral process is best understood by analyzing these principles (Davis-Roberts & Carroll, 2010). Successful election administration depends on an army of poll workers responsible for front-line interaction with voters at the polling place. Election equipment and poll workers depend on them since they are the first lines of defense in system security.

The primary tasks that poll workers execute involve opening polling stations, welcoming voters, managing voters who are lining up, checking in voters, issuing ballots, assisting with provisional ballots, monitoring the polling station, operating voting equipment, processing results, and closing polling stations. Four elements underpin the implementation of these tasks in a polling station: first, a mechanism to determine whether an individual is entitled to

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vote; second, a system to cast a confidential vote; third, a measure to prevent multiple votes by a single voter; and fourth, a method to ensure the accuracy of the total vote count (Maley,2020). Poll workers perform most of the tasks on a single election day or a couple of days that occur every few years (Montjoy, 2008). On election day, poll workers set up electoral materials and provide all-purpose assistance at the polling station. They ensure that voting logistics run smoothly, process voters, and assist voters with casting their ballots. Poll workers direct voters to the sign-in desk, check their identification, ask voters to sign in, and hand out ballots. After the votes are cast, poll clerks impress voters' fingers with ink to prevent revoting. They count the ballots, sign the tally sheets, and transmit the results to the National Electoral Commission (Amegnan et al.,2017). Since poll workers play an essential role in voting by disseminating ballots, checking signatures, and answering voter queries, having enough poll workers is imperative to democratic elections (Hostetter, J. D., 2020). The responsibility of keeping the polling place free of campaign materials rests with the poll workers during elections (Student Government Association., 2007). Also, poll workers can check identification to validate that the individual is appropriately registered to vote and in the correct polling place (Ansolabehere, S., 2007).

Poll workers have a critical role in the outcome of democratic elections. Poll workers must display organizational and logistical skills and individual aptitude. Training and practice provide poll workers with the proficiency necessary for their jobs. Nevertheless, it was revealed that during elections in developing countries, electoral workers hardly complete their duties satisfactorily (Pastor, 1999). Accordingly, the election agency must establish effective methods of recruitment as well as practical training procedures to develop and support the proficiency of poll workers. Several factors can make training poll workers difficult. Because state, local, and federal laws have different requirements, local election administrators may need help putting suggestions from national groups like the Elections Administration Commission (EAC) into practice. As a result, each jurisdiction must devise its strategy when changing how poll workers are trained (Favreau et al.; E. K., 2016). These widely dispersed poll workers serve as the first point of contact for tens of millions of voters. According to principal-agent theory, this is a challenging assignment for election officials. The self-selection of poll workers makes it possible that they are not all highly qualified. Training is crucial because they are dispersed throughout several jurisdictions simultaneously and may shirk their responsibilities (Burden et al., 2015).

Poll workers exercise discretion and implement policies that directly affect the voting experience. Voter confidence can be harmed by failing to hire and train skilled poll workers (Hall et al., K. D. 2009). Voters have a better time voting and have greater confidence in the election process when they have positive contacts with poll workers. The achievement of the tasks reflects the level of proficiency that poll workers demonstrate, but more importantly, it affects the level of confidence that voters have in the voting process (Claasen et al., 2008).

During the campaign, several violent incidents occurred where the opposition parties and CHP, HDP, Felicity, and iYiparty reported several attacks on their offices, vehicles, electoral materials, and hindrances of meetings in multiple cities. The most controversial event occurred on June 14, when a violent shooting incident in Southern East village Suruc between AKP campaigners and local shopkeepers, some of whom were HDP supporters, left four people dead and eight injured (Toros et al. S., 2020).

The situation in the previous elections in the Philippines has led to a phenomenological study on the experiences of the public school teachers who served during the 2022 national and local elections. The purpose of this study is to describe the lived experiences of public school teachers in Tanguib City, Misamis Occidental, as they do their duty as part of the electoral board.

The output of this study will allow people to understand and appreciate the work of the teachers as part of the electoral board. This will provide thorough and deep information regarding their experiences and challenges as they serve during the 2022 national and local elections.

## **2. Methodology**

### *2.1. Research Design*

The study used a qualitative approach using Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological design. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology is the conscious understanding of what is perceived, sensed, and known from a person's experience. This method explores experiences and sensory perceptions of researched phenomena and the

formation of understanding based on these experiences and perceptions. The approach's primary objective is to find a description of the phenomenon's nature (Creswell, 2013).

## 2.2. Research Setting

The study was conducted at Tangub City, Misamis Occidental. Tangub City is located in the southern part of the province of Misamis Occidental, forming a D-shape. It is bounded by Mt. Malindang in the north, Ozamiz City in the east, Panguil Bay in the south, and the municipality of Bonifacio in the west. Tangub City was nicknamed the "Christmas Symbols Capital of Mindanao" as many visitors prepare lots of activities and Christmas decorations and lanterns are being made and displayed in the city plaza, highways, and barangays as part of the competition.

## 2.3. Participants of the Study

The study participants were ten teachers from public schools who were chosen through purposive sampling. The following criteria were used to choose the participants: Teachers from public schools, Teachers aged 40 and above, and Teachers willing to participate in the study. Before conducting the interviews, the researchers guaranteed that the following criteria were fully met.

## 2.4. Instruments

Researchers used a researcher-made interview guide (Appendix C) to gather participant data using the structured interview guide, which the thesis committee approved. The interview guide includes opening questions, core questions, and an exit question that focuses on the lived experience of public school teachers during the 2022 national and local elections. There will be follow-up questions for each main question. The follow-up questions will come up later during the interview because they will depend on the answers provided. The interview will be done virtually and face-to-face.

## 2.5. Data Collection

In gathering the data, the researchers asked permission from the research instructor at Misamis University's College of Education to perform the study. Once the permit was granted, the researchers prepared a consent letter for each participant. The relevance of the study was explained to the participants. The participants were interviewed face-to-face and via messenger.

After all participants were interviewed, the researchers transcribed the interview transcripts, which were emailed back to the participants for confirmation. Data collection was completed when the researcher got an authorized copy of the transcribed interview. To validate the accuracy of the gathered information, the researcher used Moustakas' (1994) descriptive phenomenological data analysis, which included six data analysis steps in which the raw data were organized and prepared for review. The data was then coded and organized into themes.

## 2.6. Ethical Considerations

The names of the respondents are left optional. The researchers assure that they will respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents. It has been confirmed that all participants in the research endeavor are doing so of their own free will and have received all necessary information.

## 2.7. Data Analysis

The data analysis technique of phenomenological reduction developed by Moustakas (1994) was used in this study. The transcripts of all participants from the interviews were analyzed using Moustakas' methods. The steps in the phenomenological reduction that guide analyzing the data gathered are as follows. (1) Bracketing, (2) Horizontalization, (3) Clustering into Themes, (4) Textural Description, (5) Structural Description, (6) Textural-Structural Synthesis.

*Bracketing* - is a method researchers use to reduce the effects of preconceived notions and perceptions held prior to the start of the study. It is a process of suspending judgments and biases, or "epoch," as a result of which the researchers reach a deep level of inquiry, beginning with topic and population selection, interview design, data collection and interpretation, and dissemination of research findings.

*Horizontalization* technically refers to listing all verbatim expressions relevant to the study. Initially, the researchers investigated each statement with equal value. Statements found to be irrelevant, repetitive, overlapping, or outside the scope of the study were then ignored. Horizons are considered the constituent and meaningful parts of the phenomenon

because they are the remaining sections after the data has been polished. "Horizons are unlimited, and horizontalization is a never-ending process," says Moustakas (Moustakas, 1994).

*Clustering* – entails condensing experiences into invariant horizons, developing core themes, and validating the invariant horizons with multiple data sources. The researchers clustered the statements into themes and ensured that each theme is implied with only one meaning when reducing them to horizons. This is thought to be putting the phenomenon into a "textural language." Hyper Research was used to organize and analyze the collected data. Hyper Research is a qualitative and mixed-methods research software program. Finally, the researchers reread the entire transcript to confirm that the theme and accompanying invariant statements were clearly stated and consistent with the terms used by the participants.

*Textual descriptions* - are narratives that describe how participants perceive a phenomenon. The researchers used verbatim interview excerpts to describe the participants' experiences. The researchers explain the units of meaning in a narrative format. Using a narrative format will result in a clear understanding of the participants' experiences.

*Structural description* - Textural descriptions and imaginative variation are central to this aspect of data analysis. The researchers create a mental picture of how the experience occurred through imaginative variation and then construct a personal structure of the experience.

In the *textual-structural synthesis* process, the researchers compiled the meaning units of each participant and created a composite of textural and structural descriptions that they all shared. A narrative or synthesis represents all participants and is written in the third person. The primary goal of this final step in Moustakas' method is to capture the essence of the phenomenon's experience.

### 3. Results and Discussion

An interview was conducted with 10 participants describing the lived experiences of public school teachers who served as poll workers during the 2022 national and local elections. Themes are derived from the participant's responses in the study after the interview. The participants' responses were analyzed using Hyper Research software to generate an appropriate theme (Table 1). The study identified the following six (6) relevant themes: (1) Being Prepared to apply the Training, (2) Experiencing Technical Difficulties, (3) Experiencing Internet Instability, (4) Experiencing Psychological Differences, (5) Using Coping Strategies (6) Being Fulfilled and Satisfied in the Job.

#### ***Theme 1: Being Prepared to Apply the Training***

Training is the teaching or development of skills, knowledge, or fitness related to specific functional competencies in oneself or others. Training aims to improve capability, capacity, productivity, and performance. Training has three main goals from the individual employee's perspective: Increase the individual's level of awareness. Improve an individual's expertise in one or more areas. Increase an individual's motivation to do a good job. In the case of electoral board members, or what we call poll workers, they undergo training, seminars, and briefings to ensure that they will carry out their job well during Election Day. Their work as members of the electoral board is significant because many have trusted them to carry out a successful, clean, and honest election. They've been very well-oriented and well-informed regarding their roles and responsibilities as poll workers. The study's central theme on Being Prepared to Apply the Training was grouped into two subthemes: Readiness and Thorough Preparation.

**Readiness.** The readiness of electoral board members on election day refers to their preparedness and competence to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities during the voting process. Being well-prepared helps maintain efficiency in the voting process, minimizing wait times for voters and ensuring that polling stations can accommodate all eligible voters. The readiness of electoral board members is vital to the successful and credible execution of an election. It promotes fairness, accuracy, and public trust in the electoral process, which are foundational principles of democratic elections. These were revealed in the answers of the participants.

*"When I was appointed as one of the EB Poll Clerks, COMELEC organized and oriented us for our role in the 2022 national and local elections. They sent us to train at CDO to equip us for the automated election, specifically in operating the Vote Counting Machine (VCM). We underwent a hands-on and an online written examination, which the DOST conducted. To ensure that we teachers are capable, equipped, and 100% ready for election day, we must pass both the hands-on and online examinations and get certification from the DOST". (P5)*

*"The training was significant and pertinent. The speakers' depth of knowledge on the specified subjects was evident during our training. Another thing I appreciated was that we had ample time to handle the VCM so that we could become thoroughly acquainted with and understand how it worked." (P2)*

**Table 1.** Emerging Themes

Initial Subthemes	Subthemes	Main Theme
Gave updates to the voters. Has been up to date to carry out the job during the election day.	Readiness	Being Prepared to Apply the Training.
Studied the handbook. Attend Seminars Conducts Final briefing and testing	Thorough Preparation	
Lack Technological Skills Technically challenged. Having the hard time learning the steps. Having the hard time complying the digital signature.	Digital Illiteracy	Experiencing Technical Difficulties
Has complications to provide service. Paper Jam Issues Delayed Services	Machine Malfunctions	
No proper communication Transmission of data was slow	Connectivity Problem	Experiencing Internet Instability
Felt competence to the job Ready to fulfil the job as an electoral board member	Dedication towards Work	Being Fulfilled and Satisfied in the Job
Felt thrilled Remains calm	Encountering a Variety of Emotions	Experiencing Psychological Differences
Displays fairness towards work Remains neutral and transparent	Neutrality	
Prompt to the time of work	Time Management	Using Coping Strategies

**Thorough Preparation.** Electoral board members must be prepared on election day for the electoral process to run smoothly and fairly. The credibility and validity of the electoral process depend on how prepared the electoral board members are. It contributes to ensuring that elections are held fairly, effectively, and legally, which is essential for sustaining democratic norms and public confidence in the electoral process. These were revealed in the answers of the participants.

*"I have attended the seminar for the electoral board. I studied and researched the roles and responsibilities of being an EB. I have read the EB manuals provided by COMELEC. I felt a sense of necessity to fully understand and remember those roles and responsibilities as EB before election day." (P2)*

*"It was okay because we were informed and told about the rules and what we would expect during and after the election. We were guided because we were given a handbook. There was no issue during the training because we had a group chat for those who could not attend. They are still informed". (P4)*

Elections can be handled without risk even in pandemic circumstances. These advances offer chances to improve election procedures and increase their resistance to many potential hazards. These briefing addresses five areas of vulnerability: inclusive and accountable electoral management, poll worker protection, inter institutional collaboration, practical and effective election observation, and the risk of electoral violence. It draws on experience from elections held during the COVID-19 pandemic and prior health crises. The analyses show that there are a lot of steps electoral officials can take to securely conduct elections in pandemic situations. The most beneficial innovations are those that

expand on current practice, like expanding recruitment of poll workers, inter-institutional collaboration, and hybrid election observation. The evaluations also emphasize how crucial it is to keep in mind the necessity of enhancing the transparency, accountability, and security of election activities (Birch. S et al.,2020).

### **Theme 2: Experiencing Technical Difficulties**

Experiencing technical difficulties during an important event like an election is very frustrating for the poll workers. Common technical difficulties experienced during an election are paper jams and the VCM needing to accept the ballot sheets. This problem has been the cause of delays in voting. As a result, people get frustrated as well, thinking that an anomaly is happening. The study's main theme on Experiencing Technical Difficulties was grouped into two subthemes: Digital Illiteracy and Machine Malfunctions.

**Digital Illiteracy.** Before the election, the Commission on Elections announced that they would use digital signatures to transmit election results and other security measures in the 2022 national and local polls. The foundation for canvassing votes and announcing a candidate is "transmitted electronically and digitally signed shall be considered as official election results" according to this Act, also known as the Election Automation Law." However, to make the election results more credible, they opted also to implement the digital signatures of the Board of Election Inspectors (BEIs). It is guaranteed that with this, the work of poll workers will be easier than before. However, it was found that not all teachers could apply the digital signature because they were having a hard time maneuvering computers or any technology-related things. Teachers, who are part of the electoral board, are challenged by this new implementation by the Comelec. As mentioned above, technology is familiar to teachers since they are expected to be technologically expert to cope with 21st-century learners. However, it is a challenge for those who need to be digitally literate. The answers of the participants from the interview support these:

*"I am not familiar with that; only my daughter is. I am unfamiliar with technology, so I asked for help from my daughter to apply online. However, you can see the difference between written and digital signatures." (P1)*

*"At first, I was confused, for I am not techy, but I had no choice but to comply and follow. I must accept the challenge of complying with the PNPKI. I found it hard to comply with the application because it is not user-friendly. I must undergo several processes to obtain the digital signature." (P5)*

*"We are stressed about that digital signature, and we could not use it this time because maybe it is a lack of preparation. However, we already had it, so perhaps we can use it in the next election. In the last election, we wrote our names manually on the receipts and the papers we would submit together with the thumbmark. However, it was already encoded, so we put the thumb mark and signature. Maybe next time we can already use it. So, there is less work, and it is now easier." (P9)*

**Machine Malfunctions.** Voter interruptions and considerable delays were caused on election day by a severe problem with many Voter Counting Machines (VCMs) malfunctioning. Most voting count machines (VCMs), essential to the voting process, experienced technical difficulties throughout the day. These problems rendered Many VCMs inoperable, ranging from hardware malfunctions to software flaws. The frequent VCM malfunctions on election day significantly impacted the voting process. Voters were subjected to irritating delays, election officials faced logistical difficulties, and concerns about the dependability of electoral equipment were raised. These were revealed in the answers of the participants.

*"During the election, early in the morning, we already experienced issues. Every time we fed the VCM, we experienced paper jams, so we needed to do some pushing and pulling. Most of our voters were senior citizens who needed assistance. That made the delay of voting worse, and there was congestion outside. We could not transmit election returns from the polling center because of signal issues." (P3)*

*"Sometimes the VCM will not accept the ballot papers, and then sometimes there will be a ballot jam, and then, of course, the supporters of both political parties. The election now is different than the last election because, you know, the parties are very concerned with the voters. That is why they complain that we are unfair. We are non-partisan, so any party does not favor us." (P9)*

*"It took a while to realize that the vote was over due to technical issues like paper jams. Also, most of the voters are senior citizens who need some assistance. That is why it also causes a delay for the voters." (P1)*

In the twenty-first century, where knowledge is virtually limitless, the position of the teacher has grown increasingly complicated. Teachers are required to adopt a technological mindset and take ownership of their instruction and students' development (Davidson, 2012). As we enter the next century, increased access to knowledge made possible

by new technology and the requirement to prepare kids for competition in a growing information-based global economy promise to profoundly alter how schools operate (Harvey & Purnell, 1995; Jonasson, 2017). NCLB (2001) suggested technology integration can enhance teaching and learning in ELA classes. It is a vital function of techno-savvy teachers to empower and enable themselves and their learners to use various tools and technology for improved teaching-learning processes. They should sharpen their skills in teaching-learning methods/approaches compatible with digital technology (Amin et al., 2016).

The participants showed patience when experiencing technical difficulties. They are so dedicated to their work that they persevered and completed the task successfully despite the difficulties and delays. On the other hand, though the participants were having a hard time using technology in applying for digital signatures, they still showed appreciation for it. The participants acknowledge the benefits they could get from using such technology despite having trouble due to needing to be fully literate when it comes to technology use.

### **Theme 3: Experiencing Internet Instability**

Internet instability can disrupt work tasks and cause delays. In the business world, an internet connection failure can be catastrophic to a retailer or professional business, putting them at risk for lost sales, decreased output, and client complaints. For the national and local elections in 2022, the teachers who act as poll workers, having an unstable internet connection is a struggle since the transmission of votes has been delayed. The participants wanted to finish their work as soon as possible, but it made it even longer for them to finish since there were signal issues. However, they found a way to transmit the votes safely and securely. The study's central theme on Experiencing Internet Instability has only one subtheme: the Connectivity Problem.

**Connectivity Problem.** Access to real-time data and information is essential for election transparency, but connectivity issues can undermine this transparency by limiting the amount of election-related information that is available to observers, the media, and the public. This restriction raises questions about the legitimacy of the electoral process. Unfortunately, a connectivity issue disrupted these crucial communication channels, impeding the timely response to emerging challenges. Effective communication among various polling stations and election offices is essential for coordinating activities, addressing issues, and sharing crucial information. Further complicating the already challenging task of ensuring a fair and efficient voting process, electoral board members experienced significant difficulties transmitting votes on election day due to persistent signal issues, underscoring the significance of addressing connectivity issues in future elections. These were revealed in the answers of the participants.

*"That was a relief, but not totally a relief because we struggled when it came to the transmission there. We finished voting very early that day. However, the signal was prolonged. Nevertheless, it is easy compared to the manual, which is tiring." (P4)*

*"During the election, early in the morning, we already experienced issues. Every time we fed the VCM, we experienced paper jams, so we needed to do some pushing and pulling. Most of our voters were senior citizens who needed assistance. That made the delay of voting worse, and there was congestion outside. We could not transmit election returns from the polling center because of signal issues." (P3)*

*"For the transmission of the results, the provider only provided a smart modem for internet connection, and in our polling place, only Globe has a signal, so we transported the VCM and ballot boxes to town, where we could easily transmit the results." (P2)*

Voting is an act of democracy. Voting is one way that citizens may express their ideas. By ensuring that every person, regardless of their talents or limitations, can exercise these rights, using technology will improve the process (Enegi et al., 2017). In addition to avoiding common election pitfalls, the advancement of communication and information technologies has made it possible for a fully automated online computerized election process; electoral vote counts are performed in real-time, and by the end of election day, the results are automatically released (Rubin, 2002). Though automated machines make elections faster and easier, some things must be considered. Slow internet connections may cause results to be delayed, especially in polling points in remote areas, and digital illiteracy may also be a factor in people's votes needing to be counted. Electronic voting has also been around for several years. Whereas some countries are adopting e-voting technologies with great success, others are abandoning technologies already adopted due to trust issues. Other countries continue to use the age-old manual approach (Adeshina & Ojo, 2017). Situating electronic voting within the context of developing nations presents several challenges. These challenges are not unconnected with the lack of infrastructure, such as Internet penetration, power, mobile additional mitigating circumstances, such as phone access, literacy levels and rugged terrains (Enegi et al., 2017). The signal problem tested the participant's patience. Despite being caught up in internet problems, they manage to accomplish their task: transmitting the data safely.

#### **Theme 4: Being Fulfilled and Satisfied in the Job**

Fulfillment is the feeling we get when we work under our natural motivations and gain a sense of purpose. Employees are increasingly interested in exploring and pursuing opportunities that give them a sense of purpose as work-life boundaries continue to blur. In contrast, job satisfaction, employee satisfaction, or work satisfaction measures workers' contentedness with their jobs, whether they enjoy the job itself, as well as certain elements or components of occupations, including the labor itself or the supervision. The participants showed satisfaction and fulfillment with their job despite the issues they had encountered along the way; they could still make it and finish their job successfully. Even though they experience pressure, stress, hunger, and lack of sleep, they still show happiness in their job. It shows how much they love and value their job. Though they went home tired, they still wanted to serve again because all the hardships they had experienced on Election Day were all worth it. The study's main theme on Being Fulfilled and Satisfied in the Job has only one subtheme: Dedication towards Work.

**Dedication towards Work.** Electoral board members bear a pivotal responsibility within the democratic process. Their dedication signifies a profound commitment to preserving the tenets of democracy, particularly the facilitation of fair and open elections that allow voters to express their collective will through the ballot. Remarkably, despite significant obstacles, their unwavering desire to succeed in their positions and serve the electorate shines through. These were revealed in the answers of the participants.

*"As a poll worker, I was happy that at the end of a very long day, I had done my work, duties, and responsibilities without major issues encountered." (P5)*

*"Every person inside the voting center — poll workers, watchers, volunteers, and individuals — was happy. I said all day's hard work, sleepless nights, and late breakfast, lunch, and dinner were paid off. Especially when our precinct successfully transmitted the result to each data center." (P5)*

*"If given the chance, I would love to serve again and be a part of one of the most significant events in our country's history, regardless of what benefits I would receive or all the hustles I have experienced." (P2)*

The thoughts and attitudes one has about their employment make up the concept of job satisfaction. All components of positive or negative feelings about a specific job are included in these attitudes, which are likely to contribute to the emergence of feelings of pleasure (or discontent). It can also be an employee's overall sense of well-being at work (Ali et al.; 2014). Having one's job matter and enjoying it are essential to engagement, motivation, and other job-related outcomes (Grant, 2018). People who are satisfied with their work are most likely proactive, productive, and committed to contributing to the organization's goals. It benefits the individual and the company or organization with which they are associated. Job fulfillment expresses an individual's general state of mind towards his or her occupation. A man with satisfactory job fulfillment holds an uplifting demeanor toward his/ her employment.

In contrast, a man who is disappointed with his or her job holds a negative temperament about the same. In general terms, job satisfaction depicts how contented an individual is toward fulfilling his or her employment competitiveness (Pandey et al.; 2021). Villanova University says, "Employees who report high job satisfaction tend to achieve higher productivity." An organization's success is more likely to inspire devoted personnel who work harder to contribute to it.

#### **Theme 5: Experiencing Psychological Differences**

Instead of physical, psychological refers to mental or emotional states. It is concerned with a person's mind and thoughts. The same situation can elicit diverse emotional reactions in different persons. Some people are angry, aggressive, and quick to lose their cool. Others are peaceful and do not get angry quickly. An individual may be so enraged at a particular thing that he may be prepared for the worst crime, like murder, while another person may only laugh at it. On Election Day, everybody experiences different kinds of emotions. Others feel angry because of delays, while others are happy because they finally cast their votes, while others also feel thrilled and excited for whoever wins. It is an overflowing mix of emotions. The study's main theme on Experiencing Psychological Differences has only one subtheme: Encountering a Variety of Emotions.

**Encountering a Variety of Emotions.** On election day, the atmosphere was teeming with diverse emotions. Some individuals radiated enthusiasm and anticipation, while others grappled with frustration and sorrow. These heightened emotional states were a direct response to the unforeseen events of the day. Nevertheless, amidst these disparities in

emotional expression, a shared aspiration remained among all: the yearning for a capable leader who could effectively steward their community. These were revealed in the answers of the participants.

*"It is thrilling because the votes are too close to each other." (P4)*

*"We are happy for the winners and sad for the losers because we know that all the candidates are preparing." (P8)*

*"I am happy, especially knowing that people around me during the reading of our poll results were surprised and excited." (P10)*

The use of emotion in the media during elections—the outpouring of rage, anxiety, and enthusiasm as partisans join the fray—is nothing new. During election season, the language of emotion, particularly anxiety and anger, is omnipresent as pundits editorialize on the nation's "mood" (Van Ingen, E., & van der Meer, T. 2016). Scientists have shown that our thoughts frequently trigger our emotions (Scherer, K. 2009).

This means two people could be in the same situation but might feel different emotions because they have different thoughts. This is like what happened on Election Day. An overflowing mix of emotions occurs because people have different thoughts regarding specific situations. Others felt angry and frustrated because of the delays, while others were happy because they finally cast their votes. Others also felt thrilled and excited for whoever would win. When an emotion is triggered, what happens? Scientists have learned that an "emotional reaction" has many different parts. The brain alters what is happening in the body because of an emotional response (Smith et al., 2017). For example, when you are afraid or angry, you might feel your heart pound, and your lungs start breathing faster. Alternatively, you might get tears in your eyes when you are sad. Some muscles in your body may contract reflexively due to emotions.

On Election Day, everyone experiences different kinds of emotions. It's a day of overflowing mixed emotions. Others use social media to express it and keep it to themselves. The participants expressed their different emotions during Election Day. Just like the voters, they also felt excitement and enthusiasm.

### **Theme 6: Using Coping Strategies**

*Coping strategies* are behavioral and cognitive tactics used to manage crises, conditions, and demands appraised as distressing. Coping skills boost resilience by teaching people to deal with negative emotions, panic attacks, and other stressful situations. When you deal with a negative emotion or situation effectively, you also move on and let go of the negative feelings that come with it. The participants effectively handled every difficult situation they encountered during Election Day. As the tension increases, they remain calm and trustworthy in their job as poll workers by being neutral and fair. They valued their roles well and did their jobs successfully and effectively despite the problematic experiences they dealt with. Though their personal choices differ from others, they still treat them with respect and show fairness because they believe it is part of their duty and will stand by it until the election is over. The study's main theme on Using Coping Strategies was grouped into Neutrality and Time Management.

**Neutrality.** The guardians of the election process are the members of the electoral board. Their impartiality guarantees a fair and impartial electoral process. Without impartiality, there is a chance that the voting process may be rigged to favor one candidate or party over another, weakening the core tenets of democracy. Voters are given trust when electoral board members maintain their impartiality. When people think that unbiased officials control the electoral process, they are more inclined to vote and accept the outcomes. To uphold democratic values, preserve confidence in the election process, and avoid conflicts, electoral board members must be impartial on election day. These were revealed in the answers of the participants.

*"As poll workers and teachers, we are obliged and mandated to be apolitical. I, for one, did not endorse or talk about candidates during the election day. I did not check on voters' shading their ballots on whom they had voted. I only did the tasks assigned and given to us as poll workers for the elections by the COMELEC." (P2)*

*"Neutrality is an important factor as an EB poll worker to avoid biases and to show fairness to both political parties. To maintain neutrality as a poll worker, I must be mindful of my actions, especially treating voters with different political beliefs and principles. Respect every voter, regardless of their color and political beliefs". (P5)*

**Time Management.** For electoral board members, managing their time well is a crucial ability because it can significantly improve their efficacy, efficiency, and election success. Days leading up to elections can be unexpected, with many problems and difficulties that demand rapid action. Board members with practical time management abilities can schedule time for unforeseen chores and problem-solving without interfering with the process. To efficiently

accomplish their tasks, meet deadlines, maintain order at polling places, and increase the overall effectiveness and credibility of the electoral process, electoral board members must have strong time management skills. These were revealed in the answers of the participants.

*"To fix the issues, we asked for the assistance of the DESO and support staff to manage and address the issues to avoid the delay of casting votes." (P5)*

*"During the election day, I arrived early at the polling station to prepare the necessary things needed during the casting of votes." (P3)*

Election Day stress is likely inevitable. People may experience stress and anxiety due to inevitable events and have different ways of handling them. Individuals may cope with their anxiety indirectly by engaging in emotion-focused avoidance behavior rather than confronting the problem directly (Folkman et al., 2016). In other words, anxiety prepares the body to act, but anxious people may avoid action because they lack a sense of control and cannot assign blame (Lerner and Keltner 2020, 2021). This is especially true when valuable resources are at stake. While anxiety may trigger attention, behavioral coping may be just as likely through distancing and avoidance rather than confronting the problem head-on (Folkman et al., 2016). In the participants' case, they dealt with their problems very well by being calm and attentive to the issues and queries being addressed.

Certain aspects of elections are always challenging, but the feelings of division and strife we are experiencing collectively as a country are challenging. It is normal to have different choices because that is the nature of every human being. People have different perceptions, and that is because they are raised in different ways and different manners. On Election Day, people had divided thoughts and opinions regarding every political candidate because of different influences. Every area becomes increasingly like itself, and the cultural gaps between places become apparent, according to the theory that people "cluster in communities where people share their aesthetic, political, and, it turns out, cultural values" (Brooks, 2019). This account is exceptionally provocative because it implies that individuals across the country possess different psychological characteristics and are strong enough to influence how individuals in a state vote.

Despite the differences in choices, the participants prove they are not affected by them because they aim to do their job as cleanly and honestly as possible. To them, respect is fundamental. Though people sometimes doubt their capabilities, they show them that they are not being biased and are just wholly doing their roles as members of the electoral board.

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study underscores the demanding nature of poll workers' responsibilities. Their roles entail substantial responsibilities and diligent effort. They operate under the constant pressure of public expectations, with citizens anticipating their impartiality and integrity irrespective of their diverse political affiliations. Educators and recognized professionals steadfastly uphold their commitment to non-partisanship, ensuring that their actions remain free from political bias and consistent with their duties as electoral board members. Remarkably, despite their work's challenging and often stressful nature, their dedication to serving the Filipino people remains unwavering.

From the findings and conclusions, this study advocates for a more inclusive approach to poll worker training, emphasizing the importance of involving all electoral board members. The current practice of having only two representatives attend training sessions needs to be revised, given the collective responsibility of all members to address election-day issues. Delays during elections have been observed when there's a need to contact someone with the necessary expertise to resolve specific problems. Despite providing a final briefing for everyone before the election, comprehensive training for all poll workers is deemed imperative. Such training ensures that every board member possesses the knowledge and capabilities required to respond to unpredictable circumstances promptly and effectively.

Furthermore, recognizing the increasing reliance on technology in modern elections, it is recommended that all electoral board members be digitally literate. This digital literacy is essential for proficiently operating the technological systems and equipment integral to the electoral process. As such, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) should consider the digital competency of the poll workers they hire. This consideration should extend to factors such as age, ensuring that individuals' performance is not adversely affected by age-related limitations. Implementing these recommendations makes the electoral process more robust, efficient, and accessible to all citizens.

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