# THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT OF A FAR-FLUNG NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL: STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:**

This study explored the learning environment of a rural public national high school in the Municipality of Don Marcelino, Province of Davao Occidental using a qualitative phenomenological research design. Forty (40) purposively selected participants from the different stakeholders like the students, teachers, parents, and members of the Local Government Unit, and only one (1) participant for the school head underwent an In-Depth Interview and Focused Group Discussion using a semi-structured interview guide/protocol. Data collected were analyzed with the data reduction approach, Thematic Analysis, and Patton's directions. Results revealed the following emergent themes on the learning environment of a far-flung school: Improving school setting amenable to learning; Inadequate proficient teaching force; Insufficient instructional technology; Deficient classroom facilities; and distinctly average academic outcomes. More so, stakeholders addressed challenges through Self-motivation and academic resourcefulness; Aiming high with Faith in the Divine; creating a positive learning atmosphere through Homerooms and Home Visits; Using best pedagogies to motivate learners; Collaborating with stakeholders and getting parents involved; and Coordinating school, community, and LGU. Shared insights of the stakeholders were: Addressed the pandemic challenges; Showed academic value despite modular learning difficulty; Improved teachers' proficiency and classroom scaffolding; Kept learning support mechanism; Sustained parents' support for learners; and Unified medium of instruction. The implications of the study were presented.

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## 1. Introduction

The school learning environment is crucial in achieving successful and effective educational programs and curricula (Watanabe-Crockett, 2019). It greatly influences students' social, emotional, and ethical growth. Failure to create a suitable learning environment hindered teachers' education capacity, affecting students' abilities, attitudes, actions, beliefs, and reasoning (Onditi, 2018). A healthy learning environment requires students to practice reading, watching, listening, thinking, speaking, writing, and using media and technology (Thorn, 2020). According to Caruso *et al.*, (2017), effective learning requires a healthy learning environment that helps students concentrate, take ownership of their learning, attempt new things, and take linguistic risks. In rural education, limited infrastructure, lack of trained teachers, and low secondary school completion expectations are perceived learning environment challenges (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019). Arcega (2019) noted that students learn better in urban contexts. Students from cities have diverse experiences, cultural norms, and practical skills compared to students from rural places (Powell, 2020). They may reject careers in agriculture due to technological exposure (Bianchi *et al.,* 2021). As Wordu (2014) phrased it, a good learning environment, facilities, teacher credentials, and school location affect students' performances.

Similarly, most rural schools lack extracurricular activities and require teachers to be specialists in several subjects, which doubles student drop-out rates and leads to early school drop-out (Moore, 2017). Frustrations may lead to mental health issues in a classroom and learning environment with few resources and disrespected teachers (Fleming, 2022). Still, the highest potential is achieved in an environment where learners are open-minded and listen to what teachers say (Erwin, 2016). The learning environment has been a significant research focus and has been added to the expanding body of knowledge.

In the United States, rural schools that teach minorities in areas with high poverty and poor parental education risk low performance, motivation, and failure (Farrigan, 2021). More so, the United Kingdom has fewer enrollees and a high transit cost while others must deal with difficulties specific to their region (Rowley, 2018). Lack of facilities, staff shortages, poor teacher quality, parental disinterest, and lack of finances are all apparent in Turkey (Akar & Sen, 2017). In Africa, there is a dearth of qualified teachers and problems getting students and teachers to remote schools (Leech *et al.,* 2022). Taiwan lacks teachers and educational facilities and has low self-esteem (Vickers & Lin, 2022). They refuse to enroll in high school, lack access to English-language learning resources, and cannot identify and read (Yang, 2015). As 80% of the poor Filipinos reside in rural regions and communities deep in the mountains and rice fields, stakeholders saw a need to address the lack of physical structure, quality of teaching, and school services (Perez,

2021). If these problems in rural education are not addressed by varied stakeholders, several students who complete their education will be lessened, and they will face the consequences of no education at all (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019).

Consequently, in a successful school learning environment, school and community stakeholders work together to realize the school's goal of producing excellent graduates with 21st-century skills. It could be seen through Collective Impact Theory, which has evolved into network-based cooperation (Salignac *et al.*, 2017) and a problem-solving method that may lead to solution emergence. As a result, achieving success and making changes in the school learning setting involve various individuals.

Due to a lack of technology, some rural schools may need help to be able to use technology to educate. Despite the Department of Education's (DepEd) best efforts, not all students are offered equal chances owing to insufficient finances and geographic locations (Ferri *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, owing to a lack of professional development opportunities, teachers are frequently unable to incorporate technology into teaching (Lynch, 2016) or are unaware of how to utilize digital technologies to support the curriculum (Jackson, 2017). The absence of a coordinated effort among stakeholders in monitoring and assessing the school learning environment impacted educational quality (Adekunle, 2018, Barrett-Tatum & Smith, 2017, Leuven & Ronning, 2016; Gorgonio 2017). Understanding stakeholders' views on rural schools helps create coordinated strategies and programs to become more adaptive, responsive, and assertive. Also, as highlighted by Wang (2021), the quality of life in an educational institution is reflected in the school environment, which is felt not only by students but also by parents, teachers, and administrators.

Furthermore, opinions held by various stakeholders impact the learning environment in schools despite the paucity of studies on their functions (Ferrer, 2021; Chiang & Lin, 2020). Albert Bandura reinforces it in his Social Cognitive Theory (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2022; Ilmiani *et al.*, 2021), which describes human learning as interrelationships between personal, environmental, and behavioral determinants. Within the framework of Control Theory in the Classroom, Glasser underscores the importance of performing a thorough examination of the shortcomings inherent in conventional education and taking the requisite measures to rectify them (Deng *et al.*, 2022). This theory posits that individuals are perceived as proactive agents who actively participate in their personal growth and possess the ability to effect change through their actions. He also makes a persuasive case for employing learning teams in schools to harness students' excitement and dedication outside but seldom in class. Control theory became a successful collaborative learning method that stressed fun and excitement (Azano & Stewart, 2015).

Also, the researcher has yet to find a similar study on the local level. It is opined that a lack of education dwindles cognitive abilities over time, causes serious damage, impairs productive capabilities, and eventually leads to poverty. Numerous nations are implementing universal education as a human right (Klaassen, 2021). Unfortunately, the educational disparity between urban and rural areas persists. There is a need to fill this

gap. Bashir *et al.* (2018), Opoku-Asare and Siaw (2015), and Sumida and Kawata (2021) observed a significant disparity in academic achievement among pupils attending secondary schools in rural and urban areas, as measured by senior school certificate examinations. Despite government efforts to provide universal education, the urban-rural gap grows. Students had to travel far and overcome difficult obstacles to get an education. Most rural students trek hours to school (Kew & Fellus, 2022), ascending steep terrains, hills, and mountains (Acheampong & Gyasi, 2019), crossing rivers on improvised bridges (Muthige, 2023), and wading through brooks (Anlimachie & Avoada, 2020) in oppressively hot or pounding rain (Hanse-Himarwa, 2015). If some students can afford to pay for a mode of transport to school, it becomes a luxury for the parents (Danial & Felix, 2014). As a result, it is critical to obtain the perspectives of various stakeholders in the far-flung rural national high school, such as students, teachers, parents, principal or school head, and the local government unit, as this could potentially mean a successful professional learner in the future, and how various stakeholders provided support mechanisms to them based on how they see far-flung schools.

The goal of this phenomenological study was to look at the learning environment of a far-flung rural public national high school in the Municipality of Don Marcelino, Province of Davao Occidental, from the perspectives of the various stakeholders: students, teachers, parents, the school head, and the members of the Local Government Unit (LGU). It seeks to answer the following research questions: 1. What is the learning environment in a far-flung school from the perspective of different stakeholders? 2. How do stakeholders manage the challenges in the learning environment? 3. What are the insights that the stakeholders can share with their peers and with the academe in general? It included descriptions of the lived experience of the students in school, interactions with other students and teachers, and their attitudes, norms, and values.

This is important because Kania and Kramer's Collective Impact Theory (2015) stresses stakeholders' shared vision, goals, measurements, and access to research and information. Due to market demands, schools in different nations may provide a particular curriculum aimed at skill development, considering the kind of learning environment that fosters the simple, convenient, and quick transfer of information and its practical applications. Learners are more motivated, participatory, and engaged in the classroom. This ensures that decision-making is in line with the intended transformation, requiring robust leadership and allocation of resources (Moore, 2022).

In place-based contexts, stakeholders cooperate to solve societal challenges, as Christens and Inzeo (2015) pointed out. it shows that several sectors, agencies, and organizations work together to solve a societal issue. Stakeholders understand rural school challenges. Stakeholder feedback may also help rural public secondary schools create varied learning environments. Likewise, this would serve as reference material for the Department of Education in improving their understanding of the learning environment of a far-flung public secondary school and be able to plan and develop stronger policies and strategies for schools in remote locations. This study could serve as a springboard for future scholars undertaking similar research.

This phenomenological study focused on one public rural national high school in the Municipality of Don Marcelino, Davao Occidental, with only 26 teachers for junior and senior high school departments. It was limited to participants' experiences; therefore, it may be subjective. Participants interpreted how they experienced the events (Mattimoe *et al.*, 2021). Participants agreed to audio-record face-to-face interviews for accurate transcriptions. The study's findings were only relevant to one municipality's public rural national high schools. Facchin *et al.* (2021) emphasized that although one participant may have commonalities with others, a study must not generalize the population based on individual similarities.

Furthermore, since administrative authorization was needed to access participants, teachers, principals, and superintendents were notified about the research and its goals. Teachers may worry that the administration may learn what they said during the interview. Teachers were less likely to answer certain questions directly to ensure good public opinion of their institution. The researcher was constrained when participants utilized various dialects, particularly cultural minorities. This was addressed by having an interpreter who would accurately communicate those select individuals' genuine intentions and meanings (Theys *et al.*, 2022).

In addition, some key concepts were operationally defined for clarity and a common context of reference. Learning environment refers to the characteristics of the learners, the goal for teaching and learning, the activities that would best support learning, the assessment strategies that best measure and drive learning, and the culture that may infuse the learning environment. It describes how students experience life at school, their relationships with other students and teachers, and the attitudes, norms, and values of a school.

Further, stakeholders comprised teachers, parents, students, the school head, and the local government units' personnel who exhibited an interest in the success of a rural national high school. In the study, teachers refer to all teaching personnel in the Junior and Senior High departments with positions as Teachers 1, 2, and 3 while parents refer to the biological father and mother or legal guardians of the students who were currently enrolled in the identified public secondary school. Students refer to senior high school individuals, aged at least 18 years old or in the age of majority, who were enrolled in the identified rural public high school in Don Marcelino, Province of Davao Occidental.

Consequently, the school head refers to the principal or the master teacher acting as principal or teachers-in-charge of the school. They were responsible for managing the school affairs and students in general. In contrast, the Local Government Unit refers to the local elective barangay officials in North Lamidan, Don Marcelino, and Davao Occidental. Correspondingly, perspective refers to how different stakeholders perceived the learning environment of a rural public national high school in the selected municipality.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Study Participants

The study utilized purposeful homogenous sampling of 41 selected stakeholders, including 10 students in grades 11 and 12, 10 teachers, 10 parents, 10 LGU personnel, and one school head. Seven (7) participants in every stakeholder were subjected to in-depth interviews, while three were subjected to focus group discussions (FGD). The number of participants has reached saturation, wherein the collecting procedure no longer yields fresh or relevant data, new theoretical insights, or new attributes of the fundamental theoretical categories (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

In Hagaman and Wutich (2017), it was recommended and suggested that anywhere from 5 to 50 participants are adequate; however, Padilla-Diaz (2017), suggested that phenomenology should be used when the study issue requires a deep understanding of human experiences shared by a group. It was advised that the study group be 3 to 15 members and participants be able to articulate their experiences. The more diverse the participants' experiences, the harder it will be for the researcher to uncover the phenomenon's core meanings.

The study was conducted in one of the far-flung rural public secondary schools of North Lamidan, Municipality of Don Marcelino, Province of Davao Occidental. Don Marcelino is considered a third-class municipality in the province of Davao Occidental. He is known for the heritage of its people and tribes and its various cultural arts. These are the main reasons why the Municipality of Don Marcelino, Davao Occidental, is often visited by tourists who want to experience rich cultures and traditions (Laugrand, 2022). Due to its location and heritage, understanding and preservation of its indigenous culture is imperative in improving the learning environment of its rural high school. Inclusion criteria are as follows: students must be bonafide junior or senior high school students presently enrolled in the identified subjects in the rural school. Teachers must teach courses in the junior or senior high school teachers at the school where the research was conducted and hold the rank of teacher 1, 2, or 3. The parents must at least have one child currently enrolled in junior or senior high school at the identified rural school subject. The headteacher must have previously handled the school's operations or acted as an official representative. Meanwhile, the Local Government Unit members must be employed or elected in public office, whether permanent, temporary, or concurrent.

On the other hand, excluded are the junior or senior high school students who were not enrolled in the identified school subject during the study or had been dropped out, expelled, or suspended. Teachers, with Master Teachers rank, were not included even if they handled junior or senior high school courses. Parents whose children were not under their custody or care in the identified classes were also excluded. The study did not include the head teacher who took a leave of absence, was not in actual physical management of the school's affairs, or was under preventive suspension. Likewise, LGU personnel who were former employees and public officials already serving their term of office were also excluded. It was also emphasized that participants were free to

participate in the research and could withdraw at any point throughout the conduct if they were uncomfortable with the questions. It was ensured that no threats, intimidation, or force were used against them.

## 2.2 Instrument / Materials

A semi-structured interview with Cebuano translation was conducted as a face-to-face interview. It was recorded for the accuracy of the transcription if participants gave their consent. It was validated by a panel of experts with an overall mean rating of 8.75, meaning "Good". The semi-structured interview was held in an open environment to allow two-way dialogue between the interviewee and the interviewer.

In the interviews, the participants voluntarily permitted them to participate in the research. Ethical considerations were upheld, such as social value, informed consent form, vulnerability, privacy, secrecy, anonymity, fairness, risk, rewards, safety, the sufficiency of the facilities, researcher credentials, honesty and trust, and reciprocity. In a 30–to 60-minute interview, participants freely discussed their experiences. They all consented to audio-record interviews for confirmation and future reference. The interview was transcribed and conferred with the participants on its accuracy. After which, it was subjected to analysis and interpretation.

The researcher adhered to protocols and procedures that were vital for a study to be noteworthy of consideration by readers that resulted in integrity and credibility of the results of the data gathered from the participants and strictly followed the Data Privacy Act of 2012 which protects all forms of information, be it private, personal, or sensitive. Evidence in the findings is solid, and the arguments made are results-based. Interview guide questions were expert-validated with a mean rating of 8.75 to ensure research credibility. The result has an audit trail that reinforces the confirmation of findings based on the methodological procedures done from raw textual data to findings. Leaving a clear audit trail that allows an impartial audit to review participant selection, data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

The study participants confirmed the interview transcript, lending credibility to the results. The researcher used the research advisor, panel members/committee, peers, and colleagues for debriefings and member checks throughout the report to develop a reputation without intrusion. More so, respecting human dignity ensures that interview questions are not derogatory or offensive to the participants while upholding their rights. Their voluntary participation, anonymity, consent for an audio recording of the proceedings, and confidentiality of data gathered from them were also secured. Further, the researcher signified that she had neither falsified nor manipulated the data gathered based on the procedures conducted. In addition, during face-to-face interviews with IDI and FGD, biosafety was ensured by adhering to the minimum health protocols.
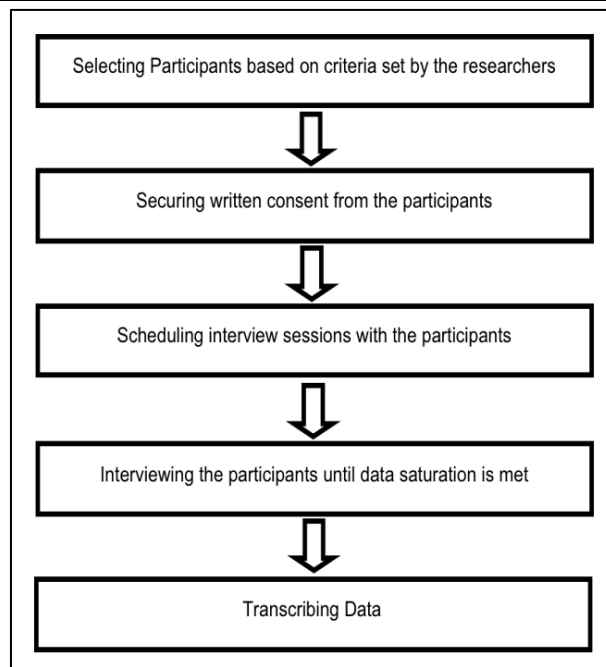
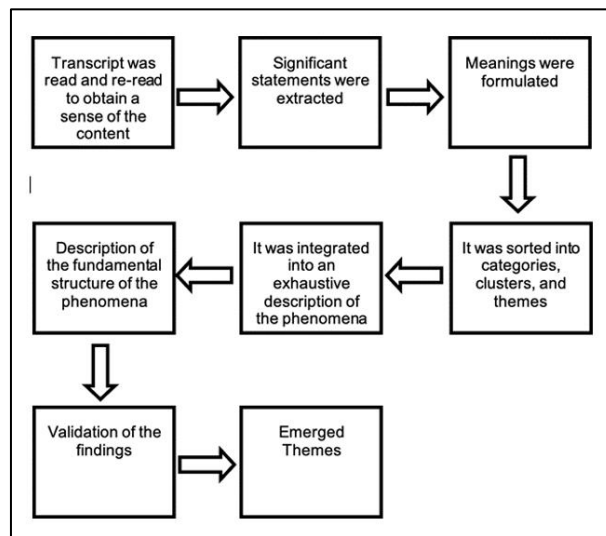**Figure 1:** Data Analysis using Colaizzi's Approach



**Figure 2:** Data Gathering Flowchart

## 2.3 Research Design and Procedure

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to describe the learning environment in one of the far-flung national high schools in Don Marcelino, Province of Davao Occidental. The specific, vivid, and relevant taste of qualitative data, arranged into events or tales, is frequently more convincing to readers (Burns *et al.*, 2022). It is a useful model in the real world and lets the researcher get involved in real events to create much detail.

According to Levitt *et al.*, (2017), qualitative research is inductive, with the researcher exploring meanings and insights in a particular context. Häfner (2022) sees it as a kind of social action that focuses on how individuals interpret and make meaning of their experiences to understand their social reality. Being exploratory by nature, it

attempted to teach about society and why some things existed the way they should be (Sallis, 2022). In the social realm, it aims to explain human behavior, emotions, attitudes, and experiences more deeply (Sanchez *et al.,* 2022).

Qualitative researchers also care about what individuals think, do, and understand, which is an absence of statistics and calculations (Albouy *et al.,* 2022). Phenomenology aims to acquire a better knowledge of the meaning of people's daily experiences and guide the understanding of phenomena that individuals consciously encounter. Phenomenology is a way to look at real-world problems. Conventionally, this enabled the researcher to remain objective, preventing subjectivity from influencing the descriptions given by the subjects. This resulted in no definition, expectation, or assumption, but the researcher was in the position of a blank slate who had developed an understanding of the core of a phenomenon using the experiences of the participants.

Consequently, the researcher described the participants' experiences objectively so that personal judgments do not affect the analysis process. The researcher proceeds with the horizontalization of data or the process whereby the researcher lists each of the relevant quotes of the studied topic and gives them equal value to the expressions of the studied topic, as laid out by Galinha-de-Sá and Velez (2022). The research also sought to communicate the participants' experiences by using Colaizzi's technique to elicit a comprehensive description of the event, which also helped in the narrative dataset extraction, organization, and analysis.

The seven-step process of this technique provided a rigorous analysis based on the first-person accounts of experiences: familiarization, identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, developing an exhaustive description, producing the fundamental structure, and seeking verification of the fundamental structure. These may originate through face-to-face interviews, but they can also come from written narratives, online interviews, research diaries, and blogs, among other sources. The overarching themes were formed by combining many important statements and topic clusters (Morrow *et al.,* 2015).

Data reduction was employed in the first coding cycle which resulted in thematic analysis, a technique for identifying, analyzing, and revealing patterns within data (Reddy *et al.,* 2020). It aims to clarify a problem's meaning or an idea's importance. In addition, Patton's instructions (2015) were used to comprehensively understand the passive conduct examination of the participants' perspectives.

The study's trustworthiness was valid and reliable since it passed the assessment points of trustworthiness, such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. For credibility, the study's findings were founded on facts, credible or plausible from the viewpoint of the study participants since, aside from being audit trailed, the research participants validated the questionnaires in which they indicated whether they agreed or disagreed with the data that had been transcribed.

More so, to build a reputation in a less intrusive manner, reliance on the research adviser, panels, and colleagues for debriefings and member checks throughout the report. There were internal validators for the Interview Guide Protocol. Participants were

provided an emailed copy of their interview transcript and made sure there was a correct recount of their stories that revealed their personal experiences. The researcher intended to meet the participants face to face if there was any discrepancy. None of the participants noticed discrepancies in their transcripts that required a second meeting. Participants were also invited to provide feedback on the transcribed data to enhance it.

Likewise, for dependability, the researcher was a good listener, did not interrupt the participants' replies throughout the interview, was objective while interviewing, and was honest when encoding their responses. Full confidence and trust in the sincerity of the research participants as they narrated their situations, feelings, and experiences were gathered. The researcher had the interest, motivation, inquisitiveness, and commitment and saw things in a scholarly approach. The researcher acted as a narrator and took the role of an etic and more of an objective viewer.

Similarly, for confirmability, a well-defined data analysis map was made. Participants' experiences and emotions were ensured to be described clearly and comprehensively. This guaranteed that the research results mirrored the experiences of the study's participants. The researcher was objective in coding the participants' responses.

Furthermore, for transferability, the study results may be conveyed to the research supervisors, who would create venues for systematically distributing the findings of completed research studies, encouraging others to understand, consider, and incorporate these findings into their operations. Research journals and bulletins may be published for broader distribution and as a potential archive for finished research. Learning Action Cells (LACs), In-Service Training (INSET), School Governing Council (SGC), and Enhanced School Improvement Plan (eSIP) / Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) were examples of existing mechanisms through which the researcher disseminated and used her study.

In addition, the researcher was issued a certification after a thorough review by the University of Mindanao Ethics and Review Committee (UMERC) on her compliance with the ethical standards set. The researcher upheld honesty and integrity in writing the report as the author, conducting the interviews, and citing sources to avoid plagiarism. This study was subjected to a plagiarism check via the software Turnitin.

## 3. Results and Discussions

This section presents the data on the participants' responses about the school's learning environment, challenges faced, and stakeholders' insights.

### 3.1 Learning Environment in a Far-Flung School from the perspective of the stakeholders

As illustrated in Table 1, stakeholders like students, teachers, parents and guardians, school head or principal, and members of the Local Government Units perceived the

learning environment of one of the far-flung rural national high schools in the Municipality of Don Marcelino, Davao Occidental as:

1) Improvement of School Setting Amenable to Learning;
2) Insufficient Proficient Teaching Force;
3) Inadequate Instructional Technology;
4) Deficient Classroom Facilities; and
5) Distinctly Average Academic Outcomes.

### 3.1.1 Improvement of School Setting Conducive for Learning

The learning environment in a rural school was perceived to be conducive to learning because of the clean, beautiful, and peaceful environment. The school strived to attain significant progress in maintaining a clean environment and resources that shall aid in setting a conducive learning environment for the development of students' competencies and the fostering of their aspirations.

**Table 1***: Learning Environment in a Far-Flung
School from the Perspective of Different Stakeholders

| Themes | Core ideas |
|---|---|
| Improvement of School Setting Conducive for Learning | • the school has a big improvement with clean surroundings.<br>• inspired to study because of beautiful surroundings.<br>• lack appropriate facilities and equipment yet improving.<br>• safe and convenient for learners to learn.<br>• a place where learners grow and nurture their future.<br>• have buildings under construction.<br>• has a wide space for the ground.<br>• no obscenities near the school.<br>• no longer be going to the city to study. |
| Insufficient Proficient Teaching Force | • best school if teachers are complete.<br>• difficult; no one will teach students during the pandemic.<br>• students no longer interested in schooling.<br>• because it is modular; no one will guide.<br>• difficult to understand; teacher not there to assist.<br>• have a lot of confusion that cannot be answered.<br>• advisors not available to assist learners.<br>• equal number of teachers in the field of specialization. |
| Inadequate Educational Technology | • far from technologies.<br>• students behind with technologies.<br>• hoping to have an internet connection.<br>• lacking with signal, the networks.<br>• computer laboratories are not utilized.<br>• access to the internet for research.<br>• provide information to gather own information.<br>• more school materials, books, classrooms, and internet.<br>• full access to needed resources for learning.<br>• internet connectivity to have a wide reference. |

| Deficient Classroom Facilities | • merely depend on the library.<br>• requires plenty of books.<br>• difficult and cannot do research.<br>• lacking classrooms and laboratories.<br>• the learning environment made teachers stagnant.<br>• facilities under construction for the face-to-face classes.<br>• related learning resources in the library for learners.<br>• inadequate proper ventilation in classrooms. |
|---|---|
| Mediocre Academic Outcomes | • difficult to do the modules.<br>• no face-to-face during the pandemic.<br>• problem going to a distant school.<br>• students hike going to school.<br>• difficulty due to the distance of the school from the Wi-Fi signal.<br>• must be absent due to distance.<br>• students have poor comprehension.<br>• rely on modules to continue studies.<br>• learners, teachers, and many others suffer.<br>• students become late learners.<br>• shy in recitation; poor communication skills.<br>• learning process is not good enough. |

This reflects the concept of Nindie (2022) and Zaid *et al.,* (2022) that if the school has good management, and everyone is smooth and harmonious. In the study of Siswanto and Hidayati (2020), schools are seen to possess a strong administration when there is a calm and cooperative learning environment and atmosphere. This means that the learning environment is good, conducive, and preferable for learning to take place. This is supported by Shaturaev (2021) that the learning environment should be peaceful and friendly.

Based on the results, it can be implied that the school has a big improvement in terms of its facilities and learning environment and students are inspired to study because of it. Since it was a pandemic, this kind of atmosphere cannot be produced in a classroom by the instructor's clear presentation of classroom expectations but by the instructions when administering the modules, the provision of chances for students to enhance their skills, and the cultivation of connections with the students. This implied that even during the pandemic, there was a safe platform for learners. Students get the impression that their contributions to the learning process are valued in this sort of classroom environment. According to Jahnke (2019), Jahnke and Hoffmann (2017), and Petersen (2016), creating an aesthetically pleasing and welcoming environment for students fosters a sense of safety and cultivates a genuine enthusiasm for attending educational institutions. It may elevate their aspirations, self-esteem, and sense of connectedness, which often results in increased concentration, involvement, and pleasure. The deliberate construction of a classroom environment conveys a significant message to young individuals, indicating their importance (Irvin *et al.,* 2017), the level of respect they get (Maheshwari, 2022), and the promotion of their active engagement in the learning process (Elango *et al.,* 2015).

This finding aligns with the research conducted by Hardwick-Franco (2018), which emphasizes the significance of incorporating environmental factors into the design of learning environments. These factors encompass well-planned social and circulation spaces, superior restroom and dining facilities, and an atmosphere that cultivates feelings of safety and security. According to Hendrix and Degner (2016), rural students need to establish robust connections among all parties involved in their educational journey.

Consequently, the school is seen as being accommodating due to its designation as a peace zone and its commitment to being child-friendly (Matshe, 2014). The present context prioritizes the safety and well-being of all individuals involved in the learning process, including learners, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Within the educational setting, the instructor and pupils engage in a collaborative effort to provide a social milieu that facilitates interaction and fosters the cultivation of interpersonal relationships.

On the other hand, the primary impact on students who experience a sense of physical or emotional insecurity inside the school environment is attributed to the absence of a conducive and supportive climate. In educational settings characterized by a deficiency of supporting norms, institutions, and links, students encountered instances of violence, peer victimization, and stringent disciplinary measures. According to Desalegn *et al.,* (2021), it is common for this phenomenon to be accompanied by a significant prevalence of absenteeism and subpar academic achievement. According to Tangchareonsamut *et al.,* 2021; Karlberg *et al.,* 2022; and Ullah *et al.,* 2021, there is a higher propensity among students to engage in deviant behavior, exhibit rebellious tendencies, and display passivity, as opposed to demonstrating motivation to attend school, engage in academic pursuits, and exhibit productivity.

In addition, there may be situations when some amenities are not easily accessible or of exceptional quality. However, parents see these facilities as only supplementary when it comes to fulfilling the fundamental requirements of students (Canales & Webb, 2018). As a result, the parents have concluded that enrolling their children in the school, despite its distant location, would be advantageous in terms of convenience (Christens & Inzeo, 2015) and accessibility (Echazarra, 2018).

More so, Tao and Xu (2022) emphasized the need for engaged and discerning parents to enhance schools, emphasizing the importance of their ability to exercise critical thinking and see modifications in the educational system as opportunities rather than threats. Soto-Lara and Simpkins (2022), McCulloh (2022), and Neuenschwander and Hofmann (2022) recommended that parents actively participate and aid in their children's educational endeavors. This is because children tend to experience a sense of motivation and encouragement when their parents possess knowledge and awareness about their academic progress and overall development within the school setting.

### 3.1.2 Inadequate Proficient Teaching Force

Another theme that emerged is an inadequate proficient teaching force wherein core ideas that support this reveal that contrasts with the perceived best school as having a

complete roster of faculty. It also raised concern due to the difficulty of having sufficient teachers to teach students, especially during the pandemic; because it is modular, no one will guide each student; it is also difficult to understand the modules since teachers are not there to assist learners; students have confusions that cannot be answered; advisers are not available to assist learners; students are no longer interested to schooling; and an equal number for the teachers in the field of specialization.

The findings of Johler *et al.*, (2022), and Mpu *et al.*, (2022) support the notion that an effective school and classroom learning environment necessitates enough qualified teachers collaborating to address uncertainties in rural classrooms and establish effective channels of communication, thereby facilitating the development of an engaging and accessible curriculum. Rural educational institutions often face a scarcity of adequately trained educators (Gibson *et al.*, 2022). The preference for individuals to avoid residing in remote regions characterized by limited access to social infrastructure might be attributed to this phenomenon (Werang *et al.*, 2022).

More so, good, and capable teachers in rural areas often transfer to urban areas in quest of more employment opportunities and a higher wage. It leaves rural areas with poorly qualified teachers who are unable to successfully transfer knowledge to students. Due to the severe shortage, schools will continue to recruit unqualified and unskilled instructors, resulting in low-quality education and poor academic performance (Jacobson, 2020). Teachers may have high absence rates for several reasons, including long commutes to schools in remote locations (McHenry-Sorber *et al.*, 2023). Substitute teachers will replace absent teachers, or courses may be combined, resulting in overcrowding or inadequate learning at school (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019).

This suggested that even if it is modular and no one will guide them, there is difficulty in understanding the modules, teachers are not there to assist them, and they have a lot of confusion that cannot be answered still teachers, students, and parents are trying their best to provide the best support system. Parents may get involved in their children's education by joining school boards, caring about their children's academic accomplishments, and attending parent meetings to learn more about their children's performance (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2022). Parental involvement in children's education has been shown to provide many benefits. Lerner *et al.*, (2022), and Principe and London (2022) have demonstrated that such involvement promotes academic performance. Additionally, Cosso *et al.*, (2022), and Kwatubana and Makhalemele (2015) have shown that parental involvement helps children become more focused on their studies.

According to Usaini and Abu Bakar (2015), one should foster an environment conducive to learning where students feel free to seek guidance whenever necessary. Since principals play an important role in developing an instructional environment (Adams & Olsen, 2017), they should also provide appropriate educational facilities to captivate students' interest and inspire them to study diligently. According to Zhou *et al.*, (2022), community people typically harbor hostility towards rural principals who lack familiarity with the social, political, historical, cultural, or ethnic aspects of the schools they oversee.

As to LGUs, the learning environment of a rural high school is developing. According to Rowley (2018), rural schools face challenges such as low student enrolment, significant transportation expenses resulting from extensive commuting distances, and variable family financial circumstances. The provided solution may not effectively address the problem at hand, since some individuals may have difficulties in navigating impediments related to their specific location.

### 3.1.3 Insufficient Instructional Technology

Another theme that emerged is insufficient instructional technology which included lack of signal and access to network, and students were behind with the use of technologies. They were hoping to have an internet connection or access to the internet for research. Also, computer laboratories were not utilized. For students, the learning environment was devoid of internet connectivity.

It indicates that the stakeholders wanted the school to possess additional instructional materials, books, classrooms, and internet connectivity to facilitate research activities (Usaini & Abu Bakar, 2015). Furthermore, stakeholders highlighted the need for internet connectivity to enable students to explore and access various reference materials (Rowley, 2018).

Kominiak (2018) asserts that the availability of technology plays a vital role in facilitating education. It is not only due to the abundance of online learning resources but also because it enables the instruction of fundamental computer skills essential for various professional pursuits. Harper (2018), and Bryson and Andres (2020) have discussed the potential of teachers using online resources to enhance their pedagogical experience across several disciplines.

### 3.1.4 Deficient Classroom Facilities

Another theme is deficient classroom facilities since students are dependent on the library, it requires plenty of books, they have difficulty and cannot do research, it lacks classrooms and laboratories, the learning environment made teachers stagnant in planning and integrating activities, facilities under construction for the face-to-face classes, related learning resources in library for learners and inadequate proper ventilation in classrooms.

This is relative to the study of Morris (2020) that another concern is school infrastructure, especially in areas of extreme poverty. Classrooms may be as basic as a room with chairs and a chalkboard. Thin, termite-prone walls, leaky roofs that are easily ruined by rain, and chambers that are likely to be windowless and doorless. Schools lack enough resources, such as tables and chairs, which contribute to classroom overcrowding. Viewing these images will give one an idea of the appalling conditions in which the children must study.

The findings of Hardwick-Franco (2018) align with the notion that the incorporation of environmental factors is essential in the design of learning environments. These factors encompass the creation of thoughtfully designed social and

circulation spaces, the provision of top-notch toilet and eating facilities, and the establishment of an atmosphere that cultivates feelings of safety and security.

More so, according to Yli-Panula *et al.,* (2022), the cognitive framework and viewpoints of the instructor had a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of the pupils. The way educational institutions manage their students seems to have an impact on both student achievement and the perception of the school by external parties and the community (Lundberg & Stigmar, 2022). The institution has many structures, some of which are now undergoing development, resulting in a restricted number of available classrooms. Several studies have shown the presence of classrooms with inadequate ventilation (Kim *et al.,* 2022; Patra *et al.,* 2022; van der Linden *et al.,* 2022).

More so, there are instances that facilities are not readily available or superb but as to the basic needs of the students, the parents see it to be just complimentary (Barkley & Major, 2020). This led to their decision that their children must be enrolled in the school, although quite remote as this would serve them to be convenient (Christens & Inzeo, 2015) and accessible (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019).

According to Monsen *et al.,* (2014), the perceptions of parents, school heads, and government officials regarding the educational needs of learners significantly influenced their regulation of classroom learning settings and their consideration of available assistance. The researchers found that classroom environments characterized by more positive attitudes towards inclusion exhibited higher levels of satisfaction and cohesiveness, as well as lower levels of friction, competition, and difficulty, compared to classroom environments with less favorable attitudes. Consequently, teachers can promote and cultivate this positive dynamic by implementing deliberate measures to foster collaboration and transparency within the classroom. It is important to note that rural students particularly benefit from strong connections among all stakeholders involved in their education (Hendrix & Degner, 2016).

### 3.1.5 Distinctly Average Academic Outcomes

Another emerging theme is having an average academic outcome that included difficulty in doing their modules, no face-to-face interaction during the pandemic, problems going to distant schools, students hiking to be present at the school, difficulty due to distance of the school from Wi-Fi signal and must be absent due to distance. Also, included were students with poor comprehension, who rely on modules to continue their studies, students who become late learners, are shy in recitation or have poor communication skills, whose learning process is not good enough due to many factors, and most learners have poor retention.

For the students, the learning environment in a rural school is seen to have difficulty doing the modules, no face-to-face during the pandemic, and problems going to a distant school. On the other hand, core ideas that students have poor comprehension, rely on modules to continue their studies, students become late learners, are shy in recitation, or have poor communication skills, the learning process is not good enough due to many factors, and most learners have poor retention are evidenced.

In Biddle *et al.*, (2018), technology may assist in overcoming some of the unique obstacles associated with rural education, such as allowing rural schools to provide courses they would not be able to offer without technology or creating chances for cooperation. Similarly, teachers see the learning environment as a problem going to distant schools, students hiking to school, difficulty due to distance of the school from Wi-Fi signal, and must be absent due to distance.

The findings of Eppley's (2015) research indicate that teachers and students at rural schools have challenges related to commuting due to the lack of nearby residential neighborhoods and the absence of on-site housing facilities. As a result, they are compelled to travel considerable distances regularly for work purposes. The act of commuting in a rural area within a developing country involves using limited public transportation options or relying on walking or personal vehicles (Zhu *et al.*, 2022).

As to parents or guardians, it was observed that students rely on modules to continue their studies, are late learners, are shy in recitation or have poor communication skills, the learning process is not good enough, and have poor retention.

The findings corroborate the findings of Fraser and Lee's (2016) research, which demonstrated that students exhibit enhanced learning outcomes when they possess a favorable perception of their surroundings, hence catalyzing their drive to engage in learning activities. In Müller and Mildenberger (2021), many factors were identified as significant contributors to academic achievement. These factors include the quality of the classroom and learning environment, the adequacy of school facilities, the qualifications of instructors, and the geographical location of the educational institution. To enhance the educational institution, it is necessary to have parents who possess critical thinking skills and the ability to make sound judgments, while also maintaining an open-minded perspective toward potential modifications in the educational system (Barana *et al.*, 2021).

The findings align with the research conducted by Peters *et al*. (2022), indicating that students encountered challenges such as extensive walking distances and formidable obstacles, which posed significant barriers to their educational attainment. Most students living in rural regions consistently transport their books and baggage to school daily. According to Ladson-Billings (2022), individuals endure extended travel periods, navigating through challenging landscapes such as narrow terrains, hills, and mountains. They also encounter rivers, which they cross using improvised bridges, traverse brooks while enduring extreme weather conditions such as suffocating heat or heavy rain.

Moreover, since previously indicated and acknowledged by Matowicki *et al.*, (2022), the act of daily commuting has significant repercussions since the process of traveling to and from school from far urban and suburban areas is very demanding and draining. Furthermore, the individuals expressed dissatisfaction due to the need to commute to and from the school located in the town. Due to their remote locations, rural schools are situated considerably from urban centers, resulting in teachers having to travel long distances. Consequently, this travel burden adversely affects instructors, who often arrive at school fatigued and ill-equipped to effectively carry out their teaching responsibilities (Conroy *et al.*, 2022; Hamilton & VanderJagt, 2022).

According to Rowley (2018), the LGU saw the school as a beneficial asset for the community due to the anticipated increase in student enrollment. This observation aligns with the findings of Buchanan *et al.*, (2022), who identified the considerable challenge kids face in commuting to school due to the significant distance between their residences and educational institutions. This arduous journey becomes an ingrained and routine aspect of their daily life.

Further, they have seen it as an important way to get people involved (Pedraya, 2016), help each other, and meet the rising expectations of young people for a good and safe place to learn (Mfaume, 2022). According to Nazir (2020), responding to the need for a good learning environment, especially in schools that are far away or in rural areas, is a hard and time-consuming job that every teacher, curriculum expert, supervisor, or representative of a major educational institution or agency is concerned with. This is because the problems in rural schools are more difficult and wide-ranging (Fargas-Malet & Bagley, 2022). Everything from the physical buildings, labs, equipment, and infrastructures to the administrative need for qualified employees is complicated.

## 3.2 Stakeholders Managing the Challenges in the Learning Environment

Based on Table 2, stakeholders like students, teachers, parents and guardians, school head or principal, and members of the Local Government Units managed the challenges in the learning environment of one of the far-flung rural national high schools in the Municipality of Don Marcelino, Davao Occidental through:

1) Self-motivation and Academic Resourcefulness;
2) Aiming High with Faith in the Divine;
3) Creating a Positive Learning Atmosphere through Homerooms and Home Visits;
4) Using the Best Pedagogies to Motivate Learners;
5) Collaborating with Stakeholders and Getting Parents Involved, and
6) Coordinating School, Community, and LGU.

**Table 2:** Management of Challenges in the Learning Environment by Stakeholders

| Themes | Core ideas |
|---|---|
| Self-Motivation and Academic Resourcefulness | • enhance skills more as a student. <br> • struggle to take the modules in school. <br> • continue life aspirations to achieve by studying well. <br> • need to go to school to learn something. <br> • save some pennies to ride a motorbike. <br> • ask for help from those who have high grades. <br> • ask those who belong to the higher level. |
| Aiming High with Faith in the Divine | • school as instruments students use in education. <br> • the pandemic is not a hindrance to continuing with studies. <br> • won't give up for the future. <br> • just fine hiking to school just to learn something. <br> • huge interest in succeeding in life. <br> • trust in God that everything will be fine. <br> • work religiously in preparing SLMS for students. |
| Positive Learning | • cope with challenges by conducting home visitation. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Atmosphere through Homerooms and Home Visits | • improving the learning system. <br> • help learners reach their ambitions in life. <br> • should be visited to be taught. <br> • teacher home visited students. <br> • learners focus well on learning. <br> • teachers should be united. <br> • requested parent's classroom meeting. <br> • teachers are not tired of visiting children in their homes. |
| Best Pedagogies as Encouragement for Learners | • learners supported, welcomed, and respected. <br> • teachers teach well, proficient, and helpful. <br> • the teaching method is beneficial. <br> • provide activities suited to learning capabilities. <br> • engage learners in co-and extra-curricular activities. <br> • help learners discover their potential. <br> • use an appropriate and timely pedagogical approach. <br> • use television, games, and PowerPoint. <br> • school far from destruction and vices. <br> • teachers trained in the division and the region. <br> • teachers pursuing postgraduate studies. <br> • maintain rapport between teachers and students. |
| Stakeholders' Collaboration and Parental Involvement | • parents take modules down to school for children. <br> • parents go to school to show support. <br> • positive support from stakeholders for good learning. <br> • conducive environment by supporting the projects to improve the classroom. <br> • teachers, students, parents, and school heads observable in following strictly the school policy. <br> • school personnel work together with the Parents-Teachers Association. <br> • parents strive to send children to school despite financial crises. <br> • offer suggestions during assemblies. <br> • conduct meetings with PTA officials to address challenges. <br> • weeding, making a garden, making a fence in school. <br> • teachers ask parents to support their children. |
| School, Community, and LGU Coordination | • the barangay council discuss about school during our session. <br> • invite teachers/school representatives in barangay sessions. <br> • present construction of the building to be done earlier. <br> • positive relationship with one another. <br> • build healthy relationships with stakeholders and the community. <br> • collaborated or cooperated with parents. <br> • linked with local officials. <br> • support of parents and teachers for school projects. <br> • parents, learners, and stakeholders willing to support. <br> • the government must provide for a linkage. <br> • support system as successful curriculum implementers. <br> • school head, teachers, parents, and barangay officials working on one goal. <br> • provide participative and interactive mechanisms for various stakeholders. |

### 3.2.1 Self-Motivation and Academic Resourcefulness

Being self-motivated and academically resourceful means that they enhance skills more as a student, struggle to take the modules in school, continue life aspirations to achieve by studying well, need to go to school to learn something, save some penny to ride a motorbike, ask help from those who have high grades and ask those who belong to the higher grade level for the questions to help them understand the difficulties they experienced with the lessons they had since those higher grade levels are already done with the discussion of the topics they had.

As to students, most of them shared that they cope by helping and preserving themselves or having the will and determination to withstand difficulties. This implies that individuals exhibit determination and resilience in pursuing their life objectives, regardless of the distance they must traverse. The individuals have the determination to persist and strive amid their conditions. Engaging in travel and hiking only to attend school or access educational materials has become a commonplace and regular practice for individuals (Fraser & Lee, 2016). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the impact of this phenomenon on the acquisition of learning outcomes among students in rural educational institutions has shown to be negative (Hendrix & Degner, 2016).

Also, research conducted by Sulap (2018) has shown that extended distances and the considerable amount of time dedicated to traveling to and from educational institutions may hurt educational engagement and successful completion. As a result, it may be inferred that the distance between the participants' residences and the school is excessive. However, it is important to mention that the observation does not suggest a decrease in the participants' degree of enthusiasm in pursuing education and lobbying for better facilities and infrastructure in the educational institution.

More so, in response to the challenge of residing far from their educational institution, students employ various strategies to overcome this obstacle and demonstrate their determination to pursue education, viewing it as a test of their resilience. They must recognize the need for perseverance in their current circumstances. Research suggests that students desire a stronger sense of connection to their school, which can be fostered through an educational environment characterized by equitable norms, transparent procedures, and supportive measures (Gopalan & Brady, 2020). This sense of belongingness enables students to actively engage in the school's programs, activities, events, and celebrations, as evidenced by Brezicha and Miranda (2022) and Pedler *et al.,* (2022).

For others, this is to continue life aspirations to achieve by studying well. This was supported by Greenough and Nelson (2015) that being determined means preparing oneself to do something by having a healthy mental state Also, as part of self-motivation and academic resourcefulness for students, they seek assistance from those who have been identified to possess good grading marks in their cards or ask those who are in the higher grade levels to the questions that were unfamiliar or uncommon to them. According to Hui (2019), consulting someone at a higher grade level does not guarantee a thorough understanding of the questions asked or the correctness of their answers. It

simply indicates that learners who have been promoted to a higher grade level have more experience than those who are below their current grade level. It highlighted the need for direction from their peers (Beesley & Clark, 2015). Peer coaching, peer tutoring, peer teaching, or seeking help for someone who has superior marks and are performer has been proven to be useful in the learning process (Irvin *et al.,* 2017).

For teachers, self-motivation and academic resourcefulness mean struggles to take the modules from the school, and their skills need to be enhanced further. For the parents or guardians, this would mean asking for help from those who have high grades or those who are in the higher grade level to answer the questions. For the school head, it would mean providing for their needs. Furthermore, for the LGU, self-motivation and academic resourcefulness would mean pursuing life aspirations by studying well and going to school to learn something.

This is corroborated by the research of Adem *et al.,* (2022), Ozhan and Kocadere (2020), and Wedel (2021) showing an appropriate learning environment, amenities, teacher credentials, and school location have a substantial influence on learners' academic progress. Rural schools are vital to their communities, performing several functions in addition to education (Kaskoun & McCabe, 2022).

### 3.2.2 Aiming High with Faith in the Divine

Another coping mechanism used by different stakeholders is having great faith in the divine being. They have seen the school as an instrument in pursuing education. Despite the pandemic, it is not a hindrance to continuing their studies, nor will they give up on their future. They are willing to hike and go to school just to learn something. They also have a huge interest in succeeding in life. The arching coping is their trust in God that everything will be fine and that they must work religiously in preparing SLMS for students for self-motivation and academic resourcefulness.

For the students, they see the pandemic as not a hindrance to continuing their studies, not giving up on their future, and trusting God that everything will be fine. Consequently, one of the parents mentioned that their huge interest in succeeding in life is trusting God that everything will be fine which made them cope with the challenges. This is supported by studies that rural students, teachers, and principals commonly confront a variety of barriers throughout their transition to and completion of secondary school, but their will to survive prevails (Hernández & Raczynski, 2016) and this has been what they were holding on (Delp, 2015).

### 3.2.3 Creating a Positive Learning Atmosphere through Homerooms and Home Visits

Another theme of coping strategy is through homerooms and home visitations. In coping with the challenges, teachers conducted home visitations, teachers were united, and they requested for meeting with the parents. When it comes to the challenges faced by the teachers, particularly internet connectivity, distance from school, and learners' lack of cooperation, they cope with these using the usage of other available instructional materials, through home visitation, and the application of best pedagogies.

This revealed that internet access is regarded as a barrier for them in sharing information with their students. This also increased the challenge of obtaining and sharing learning resources that may be of great value and useful to different stakeholders (DeNisco, 2019). In Bailey (2021), it was stated that teachers have the expertise and ability to adjust resources and build curricula in the classroom that allow greater access to learning at little to no cost while having a high positive influence on student learning.

In coping with such challenges, teachers make use of other instructional materials to be readily available. This suggested that the teachers make use of other creative ways and means just to attain their desired goals in student learning outcomes since there is an unavailable internet connection. According to Lestari *et al.* (2021), instructional resources or materials are vital in learning every subject in the educational curriculum. They allow the students to interact with words, symbols, and ideas in ways that develop their abilities in reading, listening, solving, perceiving, thinking, speaking, writing, and using media and technology (Echazarra, 2018; Hendrix & Degner, 2016).

In coping with such challenges, parents help teachers in their children's learning process. Another parent responded that they allocate special attention to their children – learners as this may enhance the skills and understanding of their students. This suggests that parents play a vital role in motivating their children to achieve success in their studies. This served as motivation for learning (Burdick-Will & Logan, 2017; Dumatog, J. & Dekker, 2017; Glossary of Education Reform, 2019).

### 3.2.4 Using the Best Pedagogies to Motivate Learners

Another theme as to the coping mechanisms of the different stakeholders is they apply the best pedagogies as encouragement for learners. This implies that learners are encouraged, welcomed, (Spitzman & Balconi, 2019), and respected (Hayward, 2019), teachers teach effectively, competent, and helpful (Bakar, 2018) and the teaching technique is useful (Joo *et al.*, 2018). They also see that activities are provided to suit learning capabilities (Castro, 2019), engage learners in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities (Siddiky, 2019), help learners discover their potential (Elbadawi *et al.*, 2021), improve, use appropriate and timely pedagogical approach (Spikol *et al.*, 2018), use television (Dofková *et al.*, 2019), games and PowerPoint (Pham & Nguyen, 2018) school far from destructions and vices (Danburam *et al.*, 2021). Teachers are trained to relate with students to strengthen the learning process/ They are pursuing post-graduate studies and establishing rapport between and among teachers and students.

In coping with the challenges of pedagogy, LGU maintains rapport between teachers and students or coordination by inviting teachers to their barangay sessions. The result implies that via collaborative efforts and mutual assistance (Fusi, 2021), the challenges encountered by students (Beesley & Clark, 2015) may be mitigated. Consequently, this has the potential to facilitate the achievement of their aspirations and goals (Abalde, 2014).

### 3.2.5 Collaborating with Stakeholders and Getting Parents Involved

Another coping mechanism that emerged is collaboration with different stakeholders and the involvement of parents. The core ideas reveal that parents take the modules to school for their children; there is evidence of a conducive environment by supporting the projects to improve the classroom, teachers, students, parents, and school head observable in following strictly the school policy; school personnel works together with the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA); parents strive to send children to school despite financial crises; offer suggestions during assemblies; conduct meetings with PTA officials to address challenges, weeding, making a garden, making a fence in school, teachers ask parents to support their children.

For students, coping with their struggles about their difficulty in answering their modules, they seek parental support. This finding highlights the significance of parental support and engagement, especially about students' academic performance. The involvement of parents as significant participants in the developmental process of their children (Lewis *et al.*, 2022) is associated with the academic achievements of students and the overall success of educational institutions (Majoko & Dudu, 2022; Su *et al.*, 2020).

Further, parental support is critical because it increases academic success, decreases dropout rates, less delinquency, and a more positive attitude toward the school. Domingo and Boix (2015) assert that the enhancement of schools necessitates discerning parents who can make well-founded assessments and do not see modifications in the educational system as a source of apprehension. It is essential for parents to actively engage in and provide support for their children's education. According to Garcia and Thornton (2014) and Hill (2022), the incorporation of family members in the educational process has been shown to enhance student achievement, reduce rates of absenteeism, and restore parental confidence in their children's educational pursuits. Learners whose parents or caregivers were actively involved in their education had higher grades and test scores, improved social skills, and demonstrated better behavior (Clifford & Göncü, 2019).

### 3.2.6 Coordinating School, Community, and LGU

Another theme is coordination among schools, the community, and the Local Government Units. This means that the barangay council includes in its discussion school-related concerns during their session, invites teachers/school representatives in barangay sessions, presents construction of building plans, and positive relationships with one another, builds healthy relationships towards stakeholders and community, and collaborates or cooperated with parents.

In addition, it is imperative to establish connections with local authorities and garner the endorsement of parents and educators for school initiatives. The involvement of parents, students, and other parties who are willing to aid is crucial. Furthermore, the government should facilitate establishing a support system that aids in effectively implementing the curriculum. This entails collaboration among school administrators, teachers, parents, and barangay officials, all working towards a shared objective.

Moreover, providing participatory and interactive mechanisms for diverse stakeholders is essential (Adamski *et al.*, 2013).

## 3.3 Insights of the Stakeholders

Based on Table 3, stakeholders like students, teachers, parents and guardians, school head or principal, and members of the Local Government Units have insights shared with their peers and the academe about the learning environment of one of the far-flung rural national high schools in the Municipality of Don Marcelino, Davao Occidental by:

1) Address the Pandemic Challenges among Stakeholders;
2) Show Academic Value Despite Modular Learning Difficulty;
3) Improve Teachers' Proficiency and Classroom Scaffolding;
4) Keep Learning Support Mechanism;
5) Sustain Parents' Support for Learners, and
6) Use a Unified Medium of Instruction.

**Table 3:** Insights Shared by Stakeholders on Learning Environment

| Themes | Core ideas |
|---|---|
| Address the Pandemic Challenges among Stakeholders | • struggle at school just take the modules to learn.<br>• taught by the teachers about good behavior.<br>• with the teacher, students can understand right away.<br>• even in the pandemic students do not forget to learn.<br>• provide enrichment activities and re-teaching.<br>• provide self-modules for learners.<br>• modular distance learning with audio and videos.<br>• cope with challenges by attending seminars/ webinars.<br>• be exceedingly determined to continue with the module.<br>• provide learners' needs under the new normal.<br>• follow the IATF protocol. |
| Manifest Academic Valuing Despite Modular Learning Difficulty | • continue life aspirations and achievements by studying.<br>• taught by teachers about good behavior.<br>• school is a huge help to reach ambitions in life.<br>• helps in molding the skills and values of learners.<br>• consistent and more encouragement for learners.<br>• establish trust, support, and rapport to establish a good learning environment.<br>• cooperation and support among teachers, students, and parents in modular learning.<br>• expecting the youth to get an education to work. |
| Enhance Teachers' Proficiency and Classroom Scaffolding | • teach whatever they need to teach.<br>• teacher and students understand each other.<br>• students should be willing to listen.<br>• modules must be completed inside the learning kit.<br>• improve the professional growth of teachers.<br>• face the challenge by crafting and implementing school programs.<br>• change of teaching strategies and approaches to suit learners' needs.<br>• motivate teachers and learners with rewards and recognition.<br>• equal chances in promoting teachers' and students' potential. |

| Sustain Learning Support Mechanism | • teachers are friendly towards students.<br>• motivated to learn and to reach life goals.<br>• encourage learners to continue schooling. |
|---|---|
| | • understand and help each other to continue with education.<br>• maintain a positive learning environment.<br>• internet connection for learning purposes with laboratories, library, and reading center.<br>• positive school climate with support of students, teachers, and parents.<br>• support coming from the stakeholders throughout the whole process.<br>• exclusive education regardless of social economic status of students. |
| Uphold Parental Support for Learners | • parents united and understood each other.<br>• encourage them to continue even if there is a pandemic.<br>• give children a conducive place to learn with the support of stakeholders.<br>• school policy set by the school personnel together with the Parents-Teachers Association.<br>• establish rapport and show positive values by doing good to others.<br>• encourage parents for students to pursue education.<br>• parents' determination to strive to educate them.<br>• motivated children to persevere and be resourceful to earn money.<br>• spend time, especially with children's studies.<br>• education as parents' legacy for children. |
| Practice a Unified Medium of Instruction | • use English as a medium as learners can hardly comprehend.<br>• apply localization in the teaching learning process.<br>• translate lessons possibly to Cebuano or Bisaya.<br>• exert effort to address students' communication problems.<br>• varied languages as a hindrance to school learning.<br>• must have unified language for better understanding. |

### 3.3.1 Address the Pandemic Challenges among Stakeholders

Insights shared by the participants are more in addressing the pandemic challenges that stakeholders experienced, such as the school's struggle wherein modules are the sole material in learning, how teachers teach about good behavior, and how the teacher can facilitate students to understand the module content right away. Even during the pandemic, students may not forget to learn, provide enrichment activities and re-teaching, provide self-modules for learners, modular distance learning with audio and videos, cope with challenges by attending seminars/ webinars, be exceedingly determined to continue with modules, address learners' needs under the new normal and follow the IATF protocol.

As to students, one of the things they learned is that self-learning is difficult, particularly during the pandemic. This has been the same with the views of teachers, parents, or guardians. The results align with the research conducted by Aldridge *et al.,* (2013), which suggests that students' perceptions of the quality and safety of the school learning environment are crucial factors. According to the findings of Lee *et al.,* (2011), there is evidence suggesting that the perception of the school learning environment by students serves as a significant predictor of their emotional and behavioral results.

Furthermore, parental perception of the quality of the learning environment is associated with their level of engagement or involvement (Lavalley, 2018).

### 3.3.2 Show Academic Value Despite Modular Learning Difficulty

One additional insight that stakeholders can share with their peers and the academic community is the importance of demonstrating academic commitment despite the challenges posed by modular learning. This includes maintaining a strong focus on personal aspirations and academic achievement, receiving guidance from teachers regarding proper conduct, recognizing the significant role of schools in facilitating the realization of life goals (Okan, 2017), fostering the development of skills and values among learners, consistently providing encouragement, establishing trust and rapport to create a conducive learning environment, promoting cooperation and support among teachers, students, and parents in the context of modular learning, and emphasizing the importance of education for the youth's future employment prospects (Liftoff, 2016; Parks, 2018; Sulap, 2018).

### 3.3.3 Improve Teachers' Proficiency and Classroom Scaffolding

Another important aspect to consider in the context of learning environments in remote rural high schools is the enhancement of teachers' proficiency and classroom scaffolding. This involves ensuring that teachers possess the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively deliver the required curriculum (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2017).

Additionally, teachers and students must establish a mutual understanding, fostering an environment where effective communication can occur (Lynch, 2016). Furthermore, the availability of comprehensive learning materials within the learning kit, including modules that cover all necessary content, is essential. To address the challenges faced in these settings, it is important to prioritize the professional growth of teachers and to develop and implement school programs tailored to the student's specific needs (McCarty, 2016).

Finally, adapting teaching strategies and approaches to accommodate the diverse learning needs of the students is also crucial. In addition, it is important to provide incentives and acknowledgments to educators and students, fostering their motivation and ensuring equitable opportunities for advancing their respective abilities.

### 3.3.4 Sustain Learning Support Mechanism

Another insight or learning when it comes to the learning environment of a far-flung rural high school is to sustain learning support mechanisms such as teachers being friendly towards students (Muijs, 2015). It motivates students to learn and to reach life goals (Ntekane, 2018). OECD (2019) encouraged learners to continue schooling even modular while in Preston *et al.,* (2013) and Mejia (2016), it understands and helps each other to continue with education. It could maintain a positive learning environment and internet connection for learning purposes with laboratories (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017).

The library and reading center are crucial support systems for establishing and maintaining a positive school climate (Mulford & Johns, 2004).

Additionally, Papay and Kraft (2017) and Wolf and Fraser (2017) highlight the positive impact of a supportive school climate on students, teachers, and parents. It is crucial to involve stakeholders throughout the process, as Papay et al. (2017) emphasize. Furthermore, Marmot (2016) contends that inclusive education ought to be extended to all students, irrespective of their socioeconomic background.

### 3.3.5 Sustain Parents' Support for Learners

Another insight or learning the different stakeholders can share with their peers and with the academe is to uphold parental support for learners such as parents united and understand each other, encouraging to continue even if there is a pandemic, and giving children a conducive place to learn with the support of stakeholders (Weinstein, 2010). The school policy set by the school personnel together with the Parents-Teachers Association seems to suggest coordinatorship and co-independence (Owens & Valesky, 2011).

This phenomenon becomes apparent when individuals create rapport and demonstrate positive values via acts of kindness towards others (Wu *et al.*, 2017). This phenomenon serves as a catalyst for parental motivation in facilitating their children's educational pursuits. The unwavering commitment shown by parents in their endeavors to provide education for their offspring serves as a driving force. Consequently, this instills a sense of perseverance and resourcefulness in children, who are inspired to generate income and allocate time specifically towards their academic endeavors. It is noteworthy that education is seen as a valuable inheritance that parents bestow on their children (Pennycook, 2016).

### 3.3.6 Use a Unified Medium of Instruction

One additional perspective or knowledge that stakeholders may impart to their colleagues and the academic community is the adoption of a standardized teaching medium. This implies that it is necessary to utilize English as the primary language of instruction, as learners may struggle to understand it (Strange *et al.*, 2012).

Additionally, incorporating localization into the teaching and learning process is recommended (Wang & Degol, 2015). This may entail the translation of lessons into Cebuano or Bisaya and the resolution of students' communication challenges. It is important to acknowledge that multiple languages can challenge effective learning in schools (Waldrip *et al.*, 2014).

## 4. Implication and Concluding Remarks

### 4.1 Implication for Practice

The results will significantly be beneficial to the Department of Education Region XI, Division, and District Offices since they may serve as the basis for crafting school plans,

introducing new programs and training, updating and modifying approaches, establishing clear performance standards and measures, define goals and indicators of success with precision, restructure school frameworks to ensure the uninterrupted provision of effective school services, foster a conducive learning environment, and enhance stakeholders' competitiveness and the implementation of school decisions.

Additionally, it was founded under the Collective Impact Theory, which states that when all stakeholders are in a union, cooperate, and support each other towards a common goal, great change and impact are expected. For this reason, this research paper discussed the learning environment of rural public schools from different stakeholders' perspectives. Using a strategy that empowers groups near students is anticipated to result in school choices that are more customized to address unique requirements, enhancing academic results.

This would serve as reference material for the Department of Education in improving their understanding of the learning environment of a far-flung public secondary school, particularly the struggles, experiences, dilemmas, and perceptions of the various identified stakeholders, including students, teachers, principals, or school heads, parents, and local government units. They would be able to plan and develop policies and strategies for schools in remote locations. The Department may include or integrate into the different rural schools the conduct of Learning Action Cells (LACs), In-Service Training (INSET), School Governing Council (SGC), Enhanced School Improvement Plan (eSIP) / Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) with regards to how to improve the more conducive learning environment for the differentiated learners highlighting their immediate needs and concerns, the coping mechanisms, and strategies responsive to the need and demands of the 21st century. There is potential for formulating and implementing more robust policies and strategies for educational institutions in geographically isolated areas.

The educational institution has the potential to establish and enhance collaborations with parents and the local community and get assistance from the local government unit (LGU). The educational institution can organize seminars, awareness campaigns, symposia, and other targeted initiatives to address the needs and problems of students in a rural school with limited access to resources. To enhance skill development, educational institutions may provide a specialized curriculum to cultivate a learning environment conducive to the efficient and effective transmission of knowledge and its practical applications. This approach aims to increase student motivation, participation, and engagement.

As a result of the study's findings, a greater number of students enrolling in far-flung rural schools in response to rising demand for skills and education, more students interested in learning and developing their skills, and knowledge and classroom environments that are suitable for a diverse range of learners, potentially encouraging active student engagement. These rural communities are trapped in a vicious cycle in which they are unable to concentrate on education due to the prevalence of poverty.

Parents and guardians may participate and be active partners of teachers, the school, and the community to help students feel secure, involved, connected, and supported by them. This may assist the community and each family in comprehending the importance of having a good connection between educational systems and the local community and cultures of origin embedded in stakeholders' favorable perceptions of the school.

Local libraries in Davao Occidental can be furnished with copies of the study that promote social awareness and integration of a dynamic approach in letting learners have varied ways of coping and understanding the learning environment of distant rural national high schools.

## 4.2 Implication for Future Research

Since changing the learning environment at a school may be challenging, stakeholders must analyze the factors that contribute to the unsatisfactory learning environment and make efforts to improve perceptions. This would make a rural school the heart of the community, where all stakeholders are welcomed, have a positive effect, and feel belonging. A good school climate would promote student attendance, which would help to alleviate many of the school's problems. This will reduce tension among instructors and students while encouraging a commendatory attitude. According to several research studies, school climate is a significant factor in teacher retention and student performance: thus, fostering a happy school atmosphere.

Because the research is expected to improve learners' self-esteem by providing support mechanisms and establishing challenges and experiences in the learning environment, more students would view education as improving one's economic position. This method encourages more students to participate in education despite the challenges they face in going to school, such as transportation, facilities, and resources.

## 4.3 Concluding Remarks

In my subjective perspective, the educational experience of students in remote rural schools is notably noteworthy, as it presents many difficulties and demands that may be mentally and physically draining. It is crucial to acknowledge that once their motivation to persevere wanes, their ability to pursue their aspirations and goals in life may be compromised. Individuals may encounter challenges in achieving their desires, such as alleviating poverty, attaining a comfortable and modest lifestyle, and attaining success. When every day is a challenge and a struggle, it becomes ordinary, and one must look at the greater and bigger benefits one can get with having an education. Although I regarded education as the primary building block of society, many places are severely neglected, lacking even basic amenities such as a steady internet connection. Rural places often have similar traits. Poor attendance, high dropout rates, substandard school infrastructure, inadequate resources, low-quality curriculum, low educational accomplishment, and teacher shortages.

Since education is for everyone and must be accessible to all learners, it is imperative, and my insights that the school may create a positive perspective in education to establish a good and competent facilitator of learning in their chosen disciplines as part of their working environment. Teaching is regarded as simple, convenient, and enjoyable when instructors teach in their area of expertise. They may exchange school-based and experience-based inputs with learners, ensuring a pleasant learning environment and a location where they can feel at ease. There are times when teachers are in a poor mood, are sad about the topics they teach that are unrelated to their area of expertise, and have little burnout. They would be inspired. This is where success is viewed as relative in a rural school, where a pleasant and sustainable learning environment would promote the growth and improvement required for productivity.

I realize that the learning environment has a significant contribution to the improvement and academic success of every learner. When there is a sufficient competent teaching force, ordinary schools become at their best and may further harness the potential of every learner. This may even be greater if varied and different stakeholders are in unison towards the improvement and better welfare of every learner.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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