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RELIVING GOOD MANNERS AND RIGHT CONDUCT (GMRC) IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATIONAL SETTING FROM THE LENS OF TEACHERS: A PHENOMENOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explores the experiences of twelve elementary teachers reliving good manners and right conduct (GMRC) in three public schools in Compostela District, Davao de Oro. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, analyzed via thematic analysis. The study identified five major themes: witnessing student transformation, struggling with behavior, efforts to instill values, lack of materials and training, and acting as role models. Teachers used five coping mechanisms, including involving parents and using real-life experiences. The study also highlighted six insights for improving GMRC implementation, such as enhancing teaching effectiveness, strengthening home-school collaboration, and integrating GMRC across the curriculum. The findings offer valuable insights for stakeholders involved in GMRC implementation in elementary education.

Keywords: *(Reliving, Good Manners And Right Conduct (GMRC), Elementary Educational Setting, Lens Of Teacher, Compostela, Davao De Oro)*

INTRODUCTION

As society continues to evolve, the traditional values were gradually declining among students. The educators and the wider community have observed a noticeable decline in moral and ethical behavior among the younger generation including a lack of respect, empathy, and social responsibility. This highlighted the urgent need to relive Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC) as a fundamental component of elementary education by reinforcing character formation early to instill core values that shape students into responsible, respectful, and morally upright individuals. This also helped bridge the gap between academic learning and character development to foster a holistic approach that nurtures intellectual growth, ethical awareness, and positive social interactions by integrating GMRC into the curriculum.

Teachers in various countries faced significant challenges in reliving Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC) in the classroom. In Indonesia, the lack of government support in training, socialization, facilities, and infrastructure makes it difficult for teachers to reinforce values, while many struggle with assessing students' character due to insufficient preparation (John et al., 2021). In Singapore, behavioral issues, particularly bullying, affect students' mental health and social well-being, with 95.8% experiencing peer victimization, making values education more challenging (Subramaniam et al., 2022). Last, in India, a rise in anti-social behaviors such as crime, corruption, and violence has contributed to a decline in moral, ethical, and spiritual values, making it difficult for teachers to instill values education in classrooms (Ghosh, 2018).

Similarly, in the Philippines, the *Please Bring Back GMRC (Good Manners and Right Conduct)* (2023) reported that there is a decline in social values and a growing lack of respect, courtesy, and basic social etiquette among people. Although, GMRC was implemented, most teachers frequently faced challenges in preparation, instructional materials, parental involvement and classroom instruction (Riego, 2023). There was also a limited time implementing the subject Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (ESP) as it is taught for 30 minutes daily, totaling 150 minutes per week in public elementary schools (Site Roe ESP Department, n.d) which is not enough for effectively teaching the subject. *Bring back the GMRC subject in primary and secondary level* (n.d) file a petition to return the good manners and right conduct in schools as our education system curriculum focuses only on professionalism and being intelligent, however lack moral and basic values and does littering, cutting through traffic, bullying and sexual harassment.

The scenario at the international and national level was also relatable among at the school where I teach in Davao De Oro. I have noticed a change and decline in students' moral behavior. When they see a teacher in the hallway, they often do not greet a teacher, and when entering the faculty office, they lack basic courtesy. In both face-to-face and online interactions, students communicate with teachers as if they are friends, often disregarding the boundaries and respect typically expected in a student-teacher relationship. In addition, elementary teachers who are teaching or a focal of GMRC have often faced difficulties maintaining proper behavior and discipline in the classroom, noting that some children struggle with appropriate

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behavior, obedience, and respect, leading to tiredness, stress, and low job satisfaction.

While other researchers on good manners and right conduct focuses on implementation, strategies, and approaches, Birhan et al. (2021) study focused only to explore the content and pedagogical approaches used by parents and teachers to teach moral and character education to children. Also, the study of Hidayati et al. (2020) only focused on the strategies for implementing local wisdom-based character education among Indonesian higher education students. Lastly, the study of Sopacua et al. (2020) only explored to analyze the implementation of character education at middle school. However, in this study, it focused on the experiences of elementary teachers, how they cope with the challenges they experienced and the insights drawn from their experiences on reliving good manners and right conduct in elementary education setting.

The results of this study can significantly impact the community by promoting respect, reducing conflict, and fostering civic-mindedness. It enhanced good manners and right conduct in elementary education setting by conducting teachers' training and workshops and engage parents and communities. The data and results of this study would be disseminated through Learning Action Cell (LAC) and initiated other programs such as Respect and Responsibility Week, Good Manners Ambassador Program, and Civic Engagement to reinforce values in students. Also, it can lead to additional initiatives such as Anti-Bullying Programs, Student-led Campaigns, and a Recognition Program would further foster respect, responsibility, and compassion in schools and communities. Furthermore, the results of this study would be presented to research forums and published in a research journal.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of elementary teachers in reliving Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC) in the classroom. This approach enabled the researcher to gather rich and meaningful insights directly from participants in their natural setting, focusing on their perceptions, challenges, coping mechanisms, and realizations. A total of twelve participants were selected through purposive sampling—six teachers participated in In-Depth Interviews (IDI) and another six in Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The criteria included teachers who are a regular public elementary school teachers with at least three years of teaching experience and who were actively involved in teaching GMRC. The researcher served multiple roles such as planner, interviewer, moderator, transcriber, and primary data analyst.

Data collection was done through face-to-face and online interviews and group discussions, which were audio-recorded and transcribed. Member checking was conducted to validate the data. Thematic analysis was applied to identify common patterns and core themes. Relevant literature also served as secondary data sources to support the analysis. To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied strategies such as triangulation, reflexive journaling, audit trails, and thick description. Ethical standards were observed, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality of information, and compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. These steps ensured that the research process was both rigorous and ethically sound.

RESULTS

The study explored the lived experiences of elementary teachers in reliving Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC) in the classroom. From the data gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, five key themes emerged regarding their experiences.

First, teachers witnessed positive transformations in students' behavior, including increased responsibility, improved greetings, and better social interaction. Second, they struggled with students' misbehavior, such as poor manners, lack of courtesy, and intentional disruption during class. Third, teachers shared the efforts they exerted to instill values and manage behavior, often dealing with overprotective parents and being mindful of students' diverse backgrounds. Fourth, they faced challenges due to the lack of instructional materials and training on GMRC. Lastly, teachers emphasized the importance of being role models, consistently demonstrating the values they taught.

To address these challenges, five coping mechanisms were identified. Teachers actively involved parents by providing feedback, initiating dialogues, and conducting home visits to reinforce values at home. They also practiced consistency through daily reminders, patiently guiding students to develop good habits. Teachers established clear rules and routines to maintain classroom discipline and instill positive behavior. They made GMRC more meaningful by using personal experiences and real-life examples. Additionally, they employed varied and interactive teaching strategies such as role-playing, storytelling, and group activities to better engage students.

The study also highlighted six key insights shared by teachers. They underscored the need for training and professional development to improve teaching strategies and classroom management for GMRC. Teachers emphasized the importance of strengthening home-school collaboration to ensure consistent reinforcement of values. They recognized their own role in modeling values through consistent behavior, and stressed the value of building positive teacher-student relationships to foster emotional support and trust. Teachers also recommended that GMRC be integrated across all subjects to make it a part of everyday learning. Lastly, they advocated for a more inclusive and equitable approach in teaching GMRC, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, benefit from character education.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of elementary teachers in reliving Good Manners and Right

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Conduct (GMRC) in the classroom. The teachers in this study observed notable transformations in students' behavior, aligning with previous research that emphasizes the positive impact of character education on developing students' social and moral skills (Singh, 2019). Teachers reported seeing students become more responsible, respectful, and socially engaged, which reflects the effectiveness of consistent GMRC instruction. This supports the idea that character education, when integrated into daily activities, fosters the development of key values like respect, empathy, and honesty (Zulela et al., 2022). The teachers also noted the importance of applying GMRC to real-world situations, helping students connect their learning to daily life, which further reinforces the relevance and application of the values taught.

However, teachers also expressed the challenges they face in managing students' behavior, particularly in the context of poor manners, lack of courtesy, and intentional disruptions in class. These findings align with the challenges highlighted in previous studies, where teachers noted difficulties in disciplining students due to a decline in respect and civility (Ghosh, 2018). The behaviors that teachers encountered—such as students joking around or disregarding authority—are not uncommon in modern classrooms, particularly as students' exposure to diverse influences outside school settings has increased. The participants in this study, therefore, echoed concerns raised by researchers (Birhan et al., 2021) about the need for effective behavior management strategies in a rapidly changing educational landscape. This suggests that while GMRC is beneficial, it must be accompanied by strong classroom management practices to address these behavioral challenges.

The coping mechanisms employed by teachers, such as involving parents in the process, consistently reminding students about values, and establishing clear rules and routines, align with best practices in character education. Involving parents, as highlighted by teachers, is critical in ensuring that values taught in the classroom are reinforced at home, creating a consistent learning environment for students (Tohri et al., 2022). The importance of parent-teacher collaboration in character education is well-documented in the literature, which stresses the need for a unified approach to support children's moral development (Sokip et al., 2019). Teachers also reported that consistently reinforcing good manners through daily reminders and guidance is crucial, as it helps students internalize the values being taught. This is consistent with the findings of Dewi and Alam (2020), who found that character education is more effective when students are regularly reminded and engaged in practicing the values.

Moreover, the study highlighted the need for better training and professional development opportunities for teachers, particularly in the area of GMRC implementation. Teachers noted the lack of training and instructional materials as significant barriers to effective teaching. This is in line with research that suggests that teachers' ability to implement character education effectively is often hindered by inadequate training and resources (Jhon et al., 2021). The findings emphasize the need for targeted professional development programs that focus on character education strategies and classroom management techniques, ensuring that teachers are equipped to handle the challenges they face in promoting GMRC. The lack of training, particularly in GMRC-specific pedagogies, also suggests that there is a gap in the teacher preparation system that needs to be addressed by educational authorities (Solumuthu et al., 2023).

Additionally, the study reinforced the idea that teachers must act as role models for their students. Teachers consistently reported that their own behavior sets an example for students to follow. Teachers' actions, both inside and outside the classroom, play a crucial role in reinforcing the values they seek to instill. This supports the notion that effective character education requires teachers to "practice what they preach" and embody the values they wish to see in their students (Nurlailah & Ardiansyah, 2022). The importance of teachers modeling good behavior develops as individuals observe and internalize the behaviors of those around them, particularly role models like teachers.

The study's findings also underscore the importance of integrating GMRC across the curriculum. Teachers in this study suggested that GMRC should not be confined to a single subject but instead be woven into all aspects of the school day. This reflects the current trend in education to integrate character education into various subjects and activities, rather than treating it as a stand-alone topic. By embedding GMRC in different areas of the curriculum, teachers can create a holistic learning experience that reinforces positive values in all aspects of students' lives (Hidayati et al., 2022).

In conclusion, this study highlights both the successes and challenges faced by elementary teachers in reliving GMRC in the classroom. While there were observable improvements in students' behavior, significant challenges remain, particularly in addressing disruptive behaviors and the lack of training and resources. The findings suggest that for GMRC to be effectively implemented, teachers need more support through professional development, clear guidelines, and sufficient materials. Furthermore, teacher-parent collaboration and the role of teachers as moral role models are crucial in fostering a positive learning environment where GMRC can thrive. Future research should focus on examining the long-term effects of GMRC education on students' behavior and character development and exploring strategies to address the ongoing challenges faced by teachers in implementing GMRC effectively.

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